ST RONAN'S WELL.

ST RONAN'S WELL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "WAVERLEY,

QUENTIN DURWARD," &c.

A merry place, 'tis said, in days of yore,
But something ails it now—the place is cursed.

WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER I.

THE REPLY.

> Thou bearest a precious burthen, gentle post,
> Nitre and sulphur—See that it explode not.
>
> *Old Play.*

"I HAVE received your two long letters, my dear Etherington, with equal surprise and interest; for what I knew of your Scotch adventures before, was by no means sufficient to prepare me for a statement so perversely complicated. The Ignis Fatuus which, you say, governed your father, seems to have ruled the fortunes of your whole house, there is so much eccentricity in all that you have told me. But n'importe, Etherington, you have been my friend—you held me up when I was completely broken down; and, whatever

you may think, my services are at your command, much more from reflections on the past, than hopes for the future. I am no speech-maker, but this you may rely on while I continue to be Harry Jekyl. You have deserved some love at my hands, Etherington, and you have it.

"Perhaps I love you the better since your perplexities have become known to me; for, my dear Etherington, you were before too much an object of envy to be entirely an object of affection. What a happy fellow! was the song of all who named you. Rank, and a fortune to maintain it—luck sufficient to repair all the waste that you could make in your income, and skill to back that luck, or supply it, should it for a moment fail you.—The cards turning up as if to your wish—the dice rolling, it almost seemed, at your wink—it was rather your look than the touch of your cue that sent the ball into the pocket.—You seemed to have fortune in chains, and a man of less honour would have been almost suspected of helping his luck by a little art.—You won every bet; and the instant that you were interested, one might have named the win-

ning horse—it was always that which you were to gain most by.—You never held out your piece but the game went down—and then the women!—with face, manners, person, and, above all, your tongue—what wild work have you made among them!—Good heaven! and have you had the old sword hanging over your head by a horse-hair all this while?—Has your rank been doubtful?—Your fortune unsettled?—And your luck, so constant in everything else, has that, as well as your predominant influence with the women, failed you, when you wished to form a connection for life, and when the care of your fortune required you to do so?—Etherington, I am astonished!—The Mowbray scrape I always thought an inconvenient one, as well as the quarrel with this same Tyrrel, or Martigny; but I was far from guessing the complicated nature of your perplexities.

"But I must not run on in a manner which, though it relieves my own marvelling mind, cannot be very pleasant to you. Enough, I look on my obligations to you as more light to be borne, now I have some chance of repaying them to a

certain extent; but, even were the full debt paid, I would remain as much attached to you as ever. It is your friend who speaks, Etherington; and, if he offers his advice in somewhat plain language, do not, I entreat you, suppose that your confidence has encouraged an offensive familiarity, but consider me as one who, in a weighty matter, writes plainly to avoid the least chance of misconstruction.

"Etherington, your conduct hitherto has resembled anything rather than the coolness and judgment which are so peculiarly your own when you choose to display them. I pass over the masquerade of your marriage—it was a boy's trick, which could hardly have availed you much, even if successful; for what sort of a wife would you have acquired, had this same Clara Mowbray proved willing to have accepted the change which you had put upon her, and transferred herself, without repugnance, from one bridegroom to another?—Poor as I am, I know that neither Nettlewood nor Oakendale should have bribed me to marry such a ——I cannot decorously fill up the blank.

"Neither, my dear Etherington, can I forgive you the trick you put on the clergyman, in whose eyes you destroyed the poor girl's character to induce him to consent to perform the ceremony, and have thereby perhaps fixed an indelible stain on her for life—this was not a fair *ruse de guerre.*—As it is, you have taken little by your stratagem—unless, indeed, it should be difficult for the young lady to prove the imposition put upon her—for that being admitted, the marriage certainly goes for nothing. At least, the only use you can make of it, would be to drive her into a more formal union, for fear of having this whole unpleasant discussion brought into a court of law; and in this, with all the advantages you possess, joined to your own arts of persuasion, and her brother's influence, I should think you very likely to succeed. All women are necessarily the slaves of their reputation. I have known some who have given up their virtue to preserve their character, which is, after all, only the shadow of it. I therefore would not conceive it difficult for Clara Mowbray to persuade herself to become a countess, rather than be the topic of conversation

for all Britain, while a law-suit betwixt you is in dependence; and that may be for the greater part of both your lives.

"But, in Miss Mowbray's state of mind, it may require time to bring her to such a conclusion; and I fear you will be thwarted in your operations by your rival—I will not offend you by calling him your brother. Now, it is here that I think with pleasure I may be of some use to you,—under this special condition, that there shall be no thoughts of farther violence taking place between you. However you may have smoothed over your rencontre to yourself, there is no doubt that the public would have regarded any accident which might have befallen on that occasion, as a crime of the deepest dye, and that the law would have followed it with the most severe punishment. And for all that I have said of my serviceable disposition, I would fain stop short on this side of the gallows —my neck is too long already. Without a jest, Etherington, you must be ruled by counsel in this matter. I detect your hatred to this man in every line of your letter, even when you write

with the greatest coolness; even where there is an affectation of gaiety, I read your sentiments on this subject, and they are such as—I will not preach to you—I will not say a good man—-but such as every wise man—every man who wishes to live on fair terms with the world, and to escape general malediction, and perhaps a violent death, where all men will clap their hands and rejoice at the punishment of the fratricide,—would, with all possible speed, eradicate from his breast. My services therefore, if they are worth your acceptance, are offered, on the condition that this unholy hatred be subdued with the utmost force of your powerful mind, and that you avoid everything which can possibly lead to such a catastrophe as you have twice narrowly escaped. I do not ask you to like this man, for I know well the deep root which your prejudices hold in your mind; I merely ask you to avoid him, and to think of him as one, who, if you do meet him, can never be the object of personal resentment.

"On these conditions, I will instantly join you at your Spaw, and wait but your answer to throw myself into the post-chaise. I will seek out this

Martigny for you, and I have the vanity to think I shall be able to persuade him to take the course which his own true interest, as well as your's, so plainly points out—and that is, to depart and make us free of him. You must not grudge a round sum of money, should that prove necessary—we must make wings to him to fly with, and I must be empowered by you to that purpose. I cannot think you have anything serious to fear from a law-suit. Your father threw out this sinister hint at a moment when he was enraged at his wife, and irritated by his son; and I have little doubt that his expressions were merely flashes of anger at the moment, though I see they have made a deep impression on you. At all events, he spoke of a preference to his illegitimate son, as something which it was in his own power to give or to withhold; and he has died without bestowing it. The family seem addicted to irregular matrimony, and some left-handed marriage there may have been used to propitiate the modesty, and save the conscience, of the French lady; but, that anything of the nature of a serious and legal ceremony took place, nothing but the strongest proof can make me believe.

"I repeat, then, that I have little doubt that the claims of Martigny, whatever they are, may be easily compounded, and England made clear of him. This will be more easily done, if he really entertains such a romantic passion, as you describe, for Miss Clara Mowbray. It would be easy to shew him, that whether she is disposed to accept your lordship's hand or not, her quiet and peace of mind must depend on his leaving the country. Rely on it, I shall find out the way to smooth him down, and whether distance or the grave divide Martigny and you, is very little to the purpose; unless in so far as the one point can be attained with honour and safety, and the other, if attempted, would only make all concerned the subject of general execration and deserved punishment.—Speak the word, and I attend you, as your truly grateful and devoted

"Henry Jekyl."

To this admonitory epistle, the writer received, in the course of post, the following answer:—

"My truly grateful and devoted Henry Jekyl has adopted atone, which seems to be exalted without any occasion. Why, thou suspicious monitor, have I not repeated a hundred times that I repent sincerely of the foolish rencontre, and am determined to curb my temper, and be on my guard in future—And what need you come upon me, with your long lesson about execration, and punishment, and fratricide, and so forth?—You deal with an argument as a boy does with the first hare he shoots, which he never thinks dead till he has fired the second barrel into her. What a fellow you would have been for a lawyer! how long you would have held forth upon the plainest cause, until the poor bothered judge was almost willing to decide against justice, that he might be revenged on you. If I must repeat what I have said twenty times, I tell you I have no thoughts of proceeding with this fellow as I would with another. If my father's blood be in his veins, it shall save the skin his mother gave him. And so come, without more parade, either of stipulation or argument. Thou art, indeed, a curious animal! One would think, to read your commu-

nication, that you had yourself discovered the propriety of acting as a negotiator, and the reasons which might, in the course of such a treaty, be urged with advantage to induce this fellow to leave the country—Why, this is the very course chalked out in my last letter! You are bolder than the boldest gipsy, for you not only steal my ideas, and disfigure them that they may pass for your's, but you have the assurance to come a-begging with them to the door of the original parent! No man like you for stealing other men's inventions, and cooking them up in your own way. However, Harry, baiting a little self-conceit and assumption, thou art as honest a fellow as ever man put faith in—clever, too, in your own style, though not quite the genius you would fain pass for.—Come on thine own terms, and come as speedily as thou canst. I do not reckon the promise I made the less binding, that you very generously make no allusion to it.

"Thine,

"ETHERINGTON.

"P. S. One single caution I must add—do

not mention my name to any one at Harrogate, or your prospect of meeting me, or the route which you are about to take. On the purpose of your journey, it is unnecessary to recommend silence. I know not whether such doubts are natural to all who have secret measures to pursue, or whether nature has given me an unusual share of anxious suspicion; but I cannot divest myself of the idea, that I am closely watched by some one whom I cannot discover. Although I concealed my purpose of coming hither from all mankind but you, whom I do not for an instant suspect of blabbing, yet it was known to this Martigny, and he is down here before me. Again, I said not a word—gave not a hint to any one of my views towards Clara, yet the tattling people here had spread a report of a marriage depending between us, even before I could make the motion to her brother. To be sure, in such society there is nothing talked of but marrying and giving in marriage; and this, which alarms me, as connected with my own private purposes, may be a bare rumour, arising out of the gossip of the place—Yet I feel like the poor woman in

the old story, who felt herself watched by an eye that glared upon her from behind the tapestry.

"I should have told you in my last, that I had been recognized at a public entertainment by the old clergyman, who pronounced the matrimonial blessing on Clara and me, nearly eight years ago. He insisted upon addressing me by the name of Valentine Bulmer, under which I was then best known. It did not suit me at present to put him into my confidence, so I cut him, Harry, as I would an old pencil. The task was the less difficult, that I had to do with one of the most absent men who ever dreamed with his eyes open. I verily believe he might be persuaded that the whole transaction was a vision, and that he had never in reality seen me before. Your pious rebuke, therefore, about what I told him formerly concerning the lovers, is quite thrown away. After all, if what I said was not accurately true, as I certainly believe it was an exaggeration, it was all Saint Francis of Martigny's fault, I suppose. I am sure he had love and opportunity on his side.

"Here you have a postscript, Harry, longer than the letter, but it must conclude with the same burthen—Come, and come quickly."

CHAPTER II.

THE FRIGHT.

As shakes the bough the trembling leaf,
When sudden whirlwinds rise;
As stands aghast the warrior chief,
When his base army flies.

* * * *

It had been settled by all who took the matter into consideration, that the fidgetty, fiery old Nabob would soon quarrel with his landlady, Mrs Dods, and become impatient of his residence at St Ronan's. A man so kind to himself, and so inquisitive about the affairs of others, could not have, it was supposed, a limited sphere for gratification either of his tastes or of his curiosity, in the Aulton of St Ronan's; and many a time the precise day and hour of his departure were

fixed by the idlers at the Spaw. But still old Touchwood appeared amongst them when the weather permitted, with his nut-brown visage, his throat carefully wrapped up in an immense Indian kerchief, and his gold-he ed cane, which he never failed to carry over his shoulder; his short, but stout limbs, and active step, shewing plainly that he bore rather as a badge of dignity than a means of pport. There he stood, answering shortly and gruffly to all questions proposed to him, making his remarks aloud upon the com his, with great indifference as to the offence it might be taken; and as soon as the anc and tess had handed him his glass of the sur and s water, turned on his heel with a bpany od morning, and either marched back to which himself in the Manse, with his crony Mr Carries, or to engage in some hobby-horsical pursuit unconnected with his neighbours in the Aultoun.

The truth was, that the honest gentleman having, so far as Mrs Dods would permit, put matters to rights within her residence, wisely abstained from pushing his innovations any farther, aware that it is not every stone which is capable

of receiving the last degree of polish. He next set himself about putting Mr Cargill's house into order; and without leave asked or given by that reverend gentleman, he actually accomplished as wonderful a reformation in the Manse, as could have been effected by a benevolent Brownie. The floors were sometimes swept—the carpets were sometimes dusted—the plates and dishes were cleaner—there was tea and sugar in the tea-chest, and a joint of meat at proper times was to be found in the larder. The elder maid-servant wore a good stuff gown—the younger snooded up her hair, and now went about the house a damsel so trig and neat, that some said she was too handsome for the service of a bachelor divine; and others, that they saw no business so old a fool as the Nabob had to be meddling with a lassy's busking. But for such evil bruits Mr Touchwood cared not, even if he happened to hear of them, which was very doubtful. Add to all these changes, that the garden was weeded, and the glebe was regularly laboured.

The talisman by which all this desirable altera-

tion was wrought, consisted partly in small presents, partly in constant attention. The liberality of the singular old gentleman gave him a perfect right of scolding when he saw things wrong; the domestics, who had fallen into total sloth and indifference, began to exert themselves under Mr Touchwood's new system of rewards and surveillance; and the minister, half unconscious of the cause, reaped the advantage of the exertions of his busy friend. Sometimes he lifted his head, when he heard workmen thumping and bouncing in the neighbourhood of his study, and demanded the meaning of the clatter which annoyed him; but on receiving for answer that it was by order of Mr Touchwood, he resumed his labours, under the persuasion that all was well.

But even the Augean task of putting the Manse in order, did not satisfy the gigantic activity of Mr Touchwood. He aspired to universal dominion in the Aultoun of St Ronan's; and, like most men of an ardent temper, he contrived, in a great measure, to possess himself of the authority which he longed after. Then was there war wa-

ged by him with all the petty, but perpetual nuisances which infest a Scottish town of the old stamp—then was the hereditary dunghill, which had reeked before the window of the cottage for fourscore years, transported behind the house—then was the broken wheelbarrow, or unserviceable cart, removed out of the foot-path—the old hat or blue petticoat, taken from the window into which it had been stuffed, to "expel the winter's flaw," was consigned to the gutter, and its place supplied by good perspicuous glass. The means by which such reformation was effected, were the same as resorted to in the Manse—money and admonition. The latter given alone would have met little attention—perhaps would have provoked opposition—but, softened and sweetened by a little present to assist the reform recommended, it sunk into the hearts of the hearers, and in general overcame their objections. Besides, an opinion of the Nabob's wealth was high among the villagers; and an idea prevailed amongst them, that, notwithstanding his keeping no servants or equipage, he was able to

purchase, if he pleased, half the land in the country. It was not grand carriages and fine liveries that made heavy purses, they rather helped to lighten them; and they said, who pretended to know what they were talking about, that old Turnpenny and Mr Bindloose to boot, would tell down more money on Mr Touchwood's mere word, than upon the joint bond of half the fine folks at the Wells. Such an opinion smoothed everything before the path of one, who shewed himself neither averse to give nor to lend; and it by no means diminished the reputation of his wealth, that in transactions of business he was not carelessly negligent of his interest, but plainly shewed he understood the value of what he was parting with. Few, therefore, cared to withstand the humours of a whimsical old gentleman, who had both the will and the means of obliging those disposed to comply with his fancies; and thus the singular stranger contrived, in the course of a brief space of days or weeks, to place the villagers more absolutely at his devotion, than they had been to

the pleasure of any individual since their ancient lords had left the Aulton. The power of the Baron-baillie himself, though the office was vested in the person of old Micklewham, was a subordinate jurisdiction, compared to the voluntary allegiance which the inhabitants paid to Mr Touchwood.

There were, however, recusants, who declined the authority thus set up amongst them, and, with the characteristical obstinacy of their countrymen, refused to hearken to the words of the stranger, whether they were for good or for evil. These men's dunghills were not removed, nor the stumbling-blocks taken from the foot-path, where it passed the front of their houses. And it befel, that while Mr Touchwood was most eager in abating the nuisances of the village, he had very nearly experienced a frequent fate of great reformers—lost his life by means of one of those enormities which as yet had subsisted in spite of all his efforts.

The Nabob finding his time after dinner hang somewhat heavy on his hand, and the moon being tolerably bright, had, one harvest evening,

sought his usual remedy for dispelling ennui by a walk to the Manse, where he was sure, that, if he could not succeed in engaging the minister himself in some disputation, he would at least find something in the establishment to animadvert upon and to restore to order.

Accordingly, he had taken the opportunity to lecture the younger of the minister's lasses upon the duty of wearing shoes and stockings; and, as his advice came fortified by a present of six pair of white cotton hose, and two pair of stout leathern shoes, it was received, not with respect only, but with gratitude, and the chuck under the chin that rounded up the oration, while she opened the outer door for his honour, was acknowledged with a blush and a giggle.—Nay, so far did Girzy carry her sense of Mr Touchwood's kindness, that, observing the moon was behind a cloud, she very carefully offered to escort him to the Cleikum Inn with a lantern, in case he should come to some harm by the gate. This the traveller's independent spirit scorned to listen to; and, having briefly assured her that he had walked the streets of Paris and

of Madrid whole nights without such an accommodation, he stoutly strode off on his return to his lodgings.

An accident, however, befel him, which, unless the police of Madrid and Paris be belied, might have happened in either of those two splendid capitals, as well as in the miserable Aultoun of St Ronan's.—Before the door of Saunders Jaup, a feuar of some importance, "who held his land free, and caredna a bodle for any one," yawned that odoriferous filthy gulph, ycleped, in Scottish phrase, the jaw-hole, in other words, an uncovered common sewer. The local situation of this receptacle of filth was well known to Mr Touchwood; for Saunders Jaup was at the very head of those who held out for the practices of their fathers, and still maintained those ancient and unsavoury customs which our traveller had in so many instances succeeded in abating. Guided, therefore, by his nose, he made a considerable circuit to avoid the displeasure and danger of passing this filthy puddle at the nearest, and by that means fell upon Scylla as he sought to avoid Charybdis. In plain language, he ap-

proached so near the bank of a little rivulet, which in that place passed betwixt the foot-path and the horse-road, that he lost his footing, and fell into the channel of the streamlet from a height of three or four feet. It was thought that the noise of his fall, or, at least, his call for assistance, should have been heard in the house of Saunders Jaup; but that honest person was, according to his own account, at that time engaged in the exercise of the evening; an excuse which passed current, although Saunders was privately heard to allege, that the town would have been the quieter "if the auld, meddling busy-body had bidden still in the burn for gude and a'."

But Fortune had provided better for poor Touchwood, whose foibles, as they arose out of the most excellent motives, would have ill deserved so severe a fate. A passenger, who heard him shout for help, ventured cautiously to the side of the bank, down which he had fallen; and, after ascertaining the nature of the ground as carefully as the darkness permitted, was at length, and not without some effort, enabled to assist him out of the channel of the rivulet.

"Are you hurt materially?" said this good Samaritan to the object of his care.

"No—no—d—n it—no," said Touchwood, extremely angry at his disaster, and the cause of it. "Do you think I, who have been at the summit of Mount Athos, where the precipice sinks a thousand feet on the sea, care a farthing about such a fall as this is?"

But, as he spoke, he reeled, and his kind assistant caught him by the arm to prevent his falling.

"I fear you are more hurt than you suppose, sir," said the stranger; "permit me to go home along with you."

"With all my heart," said Touchwood; "for, though it is impossible I can need help in such a foolish matter, yet I am equally obliged to you, friend; and if the Cleikum Inn be not out of your road, I will take your arm so far, and thank you to the boot."

"It is much at your service, sir," said the stranger; "indeed, I was thinking to lodge there for the night."

"I am glad to hear it," resumed Touchwood;

" you shall be my guest, and I will make them look after you in proper fashion—You seem to be a very civil sort of fellow, and I do not find your arm inconvenient—it is the rheumatism makes me walk so ill—the pest of all that have been in hot climates when they settle among these d—d fogs."

" Lean as hard and walk as slow as you will, sir," said again the benevolent assistant—" this is a rough street."

" Yes, sir—and why is it rough ?" answered Touchwood. " Why, because the old pig-headed fool, Saunders Jaup, will not allow it to be made smooth. There he sits, sir, and obstructs all rational improvement ; and, if a man would not fall into his infernal putrid gutter, and so become an abomination to himself and odious to others, for his whole life to come, he runs the risk of breaking his neck, as I have done to-night."

" I am afraid, sir," said his companion, " you have fallen on the most dangerous side.—You remember Swift's proverb, ' The more dirt, the less hurt.' "

" But why should there be either dirt or hurt

in a well-regulated place?" answered Touchwood—"Why should not men be able to go about their affairs at night, in such a hamlet as this, without either endangering necks or noses?—Our Scotch magistrates are worth nothing, sir—nothing at all.—Oh, for a Turkish Cadi now to trounce the scoundrel—or the Mayor of Calcutta to bring him into his court—or were it but an English justice of the peace that is newly included in the commission, they would abate the villain's nuisance with a vengeance on him.—But here we are—this is the Cleikum Inn. —Hallo—hilloa—house!—Jane Anderson!—Susie Chambermaid!—boy Boots!—Mrs Dods!—are you all of you asleep and dead?—Here have I been half murthered, and you let me stand bawling at the door!"

Jane Anderson came with a light, and so did Susie Chambermaid with another—but no sooner did they look upon the pair who stood in the porch under the huge sign that swung to and fro with heavy creaking, than Susie screamed, flung away her candle, although a four in the pound, and in a newly japanned candlestick, and fled one way, while Jane Anderson, echoing the

yell, brandished her light round her head like a Bacchante flourishing her torch, and ran off in another direction.

" Ay—I must be a bloody spectacle," said Mr Touchwood, letting himself fall heavily upon his assistant's shoulder, and wiping his face, which trickled with wet—" I did not think I had been so seriously hurt; but I find my weakness now—I must have lost much blood."

" I hope you are still mistaken," said the stranger; " but here lies the way to the kitchen —we shall find light there, since no one chooses to bring it to us."

He assisted the old gentleman into the kitchen, where a lamp, as well as a bright fire, was burning, by the light of which he could easily discern that the supposed blood was only water of the rivulet, and, indeed, none of the cleanest, although much more so than the sufferer would have found it a little lower, where the stream is joined by the superfluities of Saunders Jaup's palladium. Relieved by his new friend's repeated assurances that such was the case, the Senior began to bustle up a little, and his companion,

desirous to render him every assistance, went to the door of the kitchen to call for a basin and water. Just as he was about to open the door, the voice of Mrs Dods was heard as she descended the stairs, in a tone of indignation by no means unusual to her, yet mingled at the same time with a few notes that sounded like unto the quaverings of consternation.

"Idle limmers—silly sluts—I'll warrant nane o' ye will ever see onything waur than yoursell, ye silly tawpies—Ghaist, indeed!—I'll warrant it's some idle dub-skelper frae the Waal, coming after some o' yoursells on nae honest errand—Ghaist, indeed!—Haud up the candle, John Ostler—I'se warrant it a twa-handed ghaist, and the door left on the sneck—There's somebody in the kitchen—gang forward wi' the lantern, John Ostler."

At this critical moment the stranger opened the door of the kitchen, and beheld the Dame advancing at the head of her household troops. The ostler and hump-backed postilion, one bearing a stable-lantern and a hay-fork, the other a rushlight and a broom, constituted the advanced

guard; Mrs Dods herself formed the centre, talking loud, and brandishing a pair of tongs; while the two maids, like troops not to be much trusted after their recent defeat, followed, cowering in the rear. But notwithstanding this admirable disposition, no sooner had the stranger shewn his face, and pronounced the words "Mrs Dods," than a panic seized the whole array. The advanced guard recoiled in confusion, the ostler upsetting Mrs Dods in the confusion of his retreat; while she, grappling with him in her terror, secured him by the ears and hair, and they joined their cries together in hideous chorus. The two maidens resumed their former flight, and took refuge in the darksome den, entitled their bed-room, while the hump-backed postilion fled like the wind into the stable, and, with professional instinct, began, in the extremity of his terror, to saddle a horse.

Meanwhile, the guest who had caused this combustion, plucked the roaring ostler from above Mrs Dods, and pushing him away with a hearty slap on the shoulder, proceeded to raise and encourage the fallen landlady, inquiring, at the

same time, "What, in the devil's name, was the cause of all this senseless confusion?"

"And what is the reason, in Heaven's name," answered the matron, keeping her eyes firmly shut, and still shrewish in her expostulation, though in the very extremity of terror, "what is the reason that you should come and frighten a decent house, where you met naething but the height o' civility?"

"And why should I frighten you, Mrs Dods? or, in one word, what is the meaning of all this nonsensical terror?"

"Are not you," said Mrs Dods, opening her eyes a little as she spoke, "the ghaist of Francis Tirl?"

"I am Francis Tyrrel, unquestionably, my old friend."

"I ken'd it! I ken'd it!" answered the honest woman, relapsing into her agony; "and I think ye might be ashamed of yoursell, that are a ghaist, and have nae better to do than to frighten a puir auld ale-wife."

"On my word, I am no ghost, but a living man," answered Tyrrel.

"Were you no murdered than?" said Mrs Dods, still in an uncertain voice, and only partially opening her eyes—"Are ye very sure ye werena murdered?"

"Why, not that ever I heard of, certainly, dame," replied Tyrrel.

"But *I* shall be murdered presently," said old Touchwood from the kitchen, where he had hitherto remained a mute auditor of this extraordinary scene—"*I* shall be murdered, unless you fetch me some water presently."

"Coming, sir, coming," answered Dame Dods, her professional reply being as familiar to her as that of poor Francis's 'Anon, anon, sir.' "As I live by honest reckonings," said she, fully collecting herself, and giving a glance of more composed temper at Tyrrel, "I believe it *is* yoursell, Maister Frank, in blood and body after a'—And see if I dinna gie a proper sorting to yon twa silly jauds, that gar'd me mak a bogle of you, and a fule of mysell—Ghaists! my certie, I sall ghaist them—If they had their heads as muckle on their wark as on their daffing, they wad play nae sic pliskies—it's the wanton steed that scaurs at the

windle-strae—Ghaists! wha e'er heard of ghaists in an honest house? Naebody need fear bogles that has a conscience void of offence.—But I am blythe that MacTurk hasna murdered ye when a' is dune, Maister Frauncie."

"Come this way, Mother Dods, if you would not have me do a mischief!" exclaimed Touchwood, grasping a plate which stood on the dresser, as if he were about to heave it at the landlady, by way of recalling her attention.

"For the love of heaven, dinna break it!" exclaimed the alarmed landlady, knowing that Touchwood's effervescence of impatience sometimes expended itself at the expense of her crockery, though it was afterwards liberally atoned for. "Lord, sir, are ye out of your wits!—it breaks a set, ye ken—Godsake, put doun the cheeny plate, and try your hand on the delf-ware!—it will just make as good a jingle—But, Lord haud a grip o' us! now I look at ye, what can hae come ower ye, and what sort of a plight are ye in!—Wait till I fetch water and a towel."

In fact, the miserable guise of her new lodger now overcame the dame's curiosity to inquire

after the fate of her earlier acquaintance, and she gave her instant and exclusive attention to Mr Touchwood, with many exclamations, while aiding him to perform the task of ablution and abstersion. Her two fugitive handmaidens had by this time returned to the kitchen, and endeavoured to suppress a smuggled laugh at the recollection of their mistress's panic, by acting very officiously in Mr Touchwood's service. By dint of washing and drying, the token of the sable stains was at length removed, and the veteran became, with some difficulty, satisfied that he had been more dirtied and frightened than hurt.

Tyrrel, in the meantime, stood looking on with wonder, imagining that he beheld in the features which emerged from a masque of mud, the countenance of an old friend. After the operation was ended, he could not help addressing himself to Mr Touchwood, to demand whether he had not the pleasure to see a friend to whom he had been obliged when at Smyrna, for some kindness respecting his money matters?

"Not worth speaking of—not worth speaking

of," said Touchwood, hastily. "Glad to see you, though—glad to see you.—Yes, here I am, you will find me the same good-natured old fool that I was at Smyrna—never look how I am to get in money again—always laying it out. Never mind—it was written in my forehead, as the Turk says.—I will go up now and change my dress—you will sup with me when I come back—Mrs Dods will toss us up something—a brandered fowl will be best, Mrs Dods, with some mushrooms, and get us a jug of mulled wine—plottie, as you call it—to put the recollection of the old Presbyterian's common sewer out of my head."

So saying, up stairs marched the traveller to his own apartment, while Tyrrel, seizing upon a candle, was about to do the same.

"Mr Touchwood is in the blue room, Mrs Dods; I suppose I may take possession of the yellow one?"

"Suppose naething about the matter, Maister Fraunice Tirl, till ye tell me downright where ye have been a' this time, and whether ye hae been murdered or no?"

"I think you may be pretty well satisfied of that, Mrs Dods?"

"Troth! and so I am in a sense; and yet it gars me grew to look upon ye, sae mony days and weeks it has been since I thought ye were rotting in the moulds. And now to see ye standing before me hale and feir, and crying for a bed-room like other folk!"

"One would almost suppose, my good friend," said Tyrrel, "that you were sorry at my having come alive again."

"It's no for that," replied Mrs Dods, who was peculiarly ingenious in the mode of framing and stating what she conceived to be her grievances; "but is it no a queer thing for a decent man like yoursel, Maister Tirl, to be leaving your lodgings without a word spoken, and me put to a' these charges in seeking for your dead body, and very near taking my business out of honest Maister Bindloose's hands, because he ken'd the cantrips of the like of you better than I did,—And than they hae put up an adverteezement down at the Waal yonder, wi' a' their

names at it, setting ye forth, Maister Frauncie, as ane of the greatest blackguards unhanged; and wha, div ye think, is to keep ye in a creditable house, if that's the character ye get?"

"You may leave that to me, Mrs Dods—I assure you that matter shall be put to rights to your satisfaction; and I think, so long as we have known each other, you may take my word that I am not undeserving the shelter of your roof for a single night, (I shall ask it no longer,) until my character is sufficiently cleared. It was for that purpose I chiefly came back again."

"Came back again!" said Mrs Dods.—"I profess ye made me start, Maister Tirl, and you looking sae pale too.—But I think," she added, straining after a joke, "if ye were a ghaist, being we are such auld acquaintance, ye wadna wish to spoil my custom, but would just walk decently up and down the auld castle wa's, or maybe down at the kirk yonder—there have been awfu' things dune in that kirk and kirkyard—I whiles dinna like to look that way, Maister Frauncie."

"I am much of your mind, mistress," said

Tyrrel, with a sigh; "and indeed I do in one sense resemble the apparitions you talk of; for, like them, and to as little purpose, I stalk about scenes where my happiness departed.—But I speak riddles to you, Mrs Dods—the plain truth is, that I met with an accident on the day I last left your house, the effects of which detained me at some distance from St Ronan's till this very day."

"Hegh, sirs, and ye were sparing of your trouble, that wadna write a bit line, or send a bit message!—Ye might hae thought folks wad hae been vexed aneugh about ye, forbye undertaking journeys, and hiring folk to seek for your dead body."

"I shall willingly pay all reasonable charges which my disappearance may have occasioned," answered her guest; "and I assure you once for all, that my remaining for some time quiet at Marchthorn arose partly from illness, and partly from business of a very pressing and particular nature."

"At Marchthorn!" exclaimed Dame Dods, "heard ever man the like o' that!—And where

did ye put up in Marchthorn? an ane may mak bauld to speer."

"At the Black Bull," replied Tyrrel.

"Ay, that's auld Tam Lowrie's—a very decent man, Thamas—and a douce, creditable house—nane of your flisk-ma-hoys—I am glad ye made choice of sic gude quarters, neighbour; for I am beginning to think ye are but a queer ane—ye look as if butter wadna melt in your mouth, but I sall warrant cheese no choak ye. —But I'll thank ye to gang your ways into the parlour, for I am no like to get mickle mair out of ye it's like; and ye are standing here just in the gate, when we hae the supper to dish."

Tyrrel, glad to be released from the examination to which his landlady's curiosity had, without ceremony, subjected him, walked into the parlour, where he was presently joined by Mr Touchwood, newly attired and high in spirits.

"Here comes our supper!" he exclaimed.— "Sit ye down, and let us see what Mrs Dods has done for us.—I profess, mistress, your plottie is excellent, ever since I taught you to mix the spices in the right proportion."

"I am glad the plottie pleases ye, sir—but I think I ken'd gay weel how to make it before I saw your honour—Mr Tirl can tell that, for mony a browst of it I hae brewed lang syne for him and the callant Valentine Bulmer."

This ill-timed observation extorted a groan from Tyrrel; but the traveller, running on with his own recollections, did not appear to notice his emotion.

"You are a conceited old woman," said Mr Touchwood; "how the devil should any one know to mix spices so well as one that has been where they grow?—I have seen the sun ripening nutmegs and cloves, and here, it can hardly fill a peascod, by Jupiter!—Ah, Tyrrel, the merry nights we have had at Smyrna!—Gad, I think the gammon and the good wine taste all the better in a land where folks hold them to be sinful indulgences—Gad, I believe many a good Moslem is of the same opinion—that same prohibition of their prophets gives a flavour to the ham, and a relish to the Cyprus.—Do you remember old Cogia Hassein, with his green turban?—I once played him a trick, and put a pint of brandy in-

to his sherbet. Egad, the old fellow took care never to discover the cheat until he had got to the bottom of the flagon, and then he strokes his long white beard, and says, 'Ullah Kerim,'—that is, 'Heaven is merciful,' Mrs Dods, Mr Tyrrel knows the meaning of it.—Ullah Kerim, says he, after he had drunk about a gallon of brandy-punch!—Ullah Kerim, says the hypocritical old rogue, as if he had done the finest thing in the world!"

"And what for no? What for shouldna the honest man say a blessing after his drap punch?" demanded Mrs Dods; "it was better, I ween, than blasting, and blawing, and swearing, as if folks shouldna be thankful for the creature-comforts."

"Well said, old Dame Dods," replied the traveller; "that is a right hostess's maxim, and worthy of Mrs Quickly herself. Here is to thee, and I pray ye to pledge me before ye leave the room."

"Troth, I'll pledge naebody the night, Mr Touchwood; for, what wi' the upcast and ter-

ror that I got a wee while syne, and what wi' the bit taste that I behoved to take of the plottie while I was making it, my head is sair aneugh stressed the night already.—Maister Tirl, the yellow room is ready for ye when ye like; and, gentlemen, as the morn is the Sabbath, I canna be keeping the servant queans out of their beds to wait on ye ony langer, for they will mak it an excuse for lying till aught o'clock on the Lord's day. So, when your plottie is done, I'll be mickle obliged to ye to light the bed-room candles, and put out the double moulds, and een shew yoursells to your beds; for douce folks, sic as the like of you, should set an example by ordinary.—And so, gude night to ye baith."

"By my faith," said Touchwood, as she withdrew, "our dame turns as obstinate as a Pacha with three tails!—We have her gracious permission to finish our mug, however; so, here is to your health once more, Mr Tyrrel, wishing you a hearty welcome to your own country."

"I thank you, Mr Touchwood," answered Tyrrel; "and I return you the same good

wishes, with, as I sincerely hope, a much greater chance of their being realized.—You relieved me, sir, at a time when the villainy of an agent, prompted, as I have reason to think, by an active and powerful enemy, occasioned my being for a time pressed for funds.—I made remittances to the *Ragion* you dealt with, to acquit myself at least of the pecuniary part of my obligation; but the bills were returned, because, it was stated, you had left Smyrna."

"Very true—very true—left Smyrna, and here I am in Scotland—as for the bills, we will speak of them another time—something due for picking me up out of the gutter."

"I shall make no deduction on that account," said Tyrrel, smiling, though in no jocose mood; "and I beg you not to mistake me. The circumstances of embarrassment, under which you found me at Smyrna, were merely temporary—I am most able and willing to pay my debt; and, let me add, I am most desirous to do so."

"Another time—another time," said Mr Touchwood—"time enough before us, Mr Tyrrel—besides, at Smyrna, you talked of a law-suit

—law is a lick-penny, Mr Tyrrel—no counsellor like the pound in purse."

"For my law-suit," said Tyrrel, "I am fully provided."

"But, have you good advice?—Have you good advice?" said Touchwood; "answer me that."

"I have advised with my lawyers," answered Tyrrel, internally vexed to find that his friend was much disposed to make his generosity upon the former occasion a pretext for prying farther into his affairs than he thought polite or convenient.

"With your counsel learned in the law—eh, my dear boy? But the advice you should take is of some travelled friend, well acquainted with mankind and the world—some one that has lived double your years, and is maybe looking out for some bare young fellow that he may do a little good to—one that might be willing to help you farther than I can pretend to guess—for, as to your lawyer, you get just your guinea's worth from him—not even so much as the baker's bargain—thirteen to the dozen."

"I think I should not trouble myself to go far in search of a friend such as you describe," said Tyrrel, who could not affect to misunderstand the senior's drift, "when I was near Mr Peregrine Touchwood; but the truth is, my affairs are at present so much complicated with those of others, whose secrets I have no right to communicate, that I cannot have the advantage of consulting you, or any other friend. It is possible I may be soon obliged to lay aside this reserve, and vindicate myself before the whole public. I will not fail, when that time shall arrive, to take an early opportunity of confidential communication with you."

"That is right—confidential is the word—No person ever made a confidant of me who repented it—Think what the Pacha might have made of it, had he taken my advice, and cut through the isthmus of Suez.—Turk and Christian, men of all tongues and countries, used to consult old Touchwood, from the building of a mosque down to the settling of an *agio*.—But come—Good night—good night."

So saying, he took up his bed-room light, and,

extinguishing one of those which stood on the table, nodded to Tyrrel to discharge his share of the duty imposed by Mrs Dods with the same punctuality, and they withdrew to their several apartments, entertaining very different sentiments of each other.

"A troublesome, inquisitive, old gentleman," said Tyrrel to himself; "I remember him narrowly escaping the bastinado at Smyrna, for thrusting his advice on the Turkish cadi—and then I lie under a considerable obligation to him, giving him a sort of right to annoy me—Well, I must parry his impertinence as I can."

"A shy cock this Frank Tyrrel," thought the traveller; "a very complete dodger!—But no matter—I shall wind him, were he to double like a fox—I am resolved to make his matters my own, and if *I* cannot carry him through, I know not who can."

Having formed this philanthropic resolution, Mr Touchwood threw himself into bed, which luckily declined exactly at the right angle, and, full of self-complacence, consigned himself to slumber.

CHAPTER III.

MEDIATION.

———So, begone!
We will not now be troubled with reply;
We offer fair, take it advisedly.
King Henry IV. Part I.

It had been the purpose of Tyrrel, by rising and breakfasting early, to avoid again meeting Mr Touchwood, having upon his hands a matter in which that officious gentleman's interference was likely to prove troublesome. His character, he was aware, had been assailed at the Spaw in the most public manner, and in the most public manner he was resolved to demand redress, conscious that whatever other important concerns had brought him to Scotland, must necessarily be postponed to the vindication of his honour.

He was determined, for this purpose, to go down to the rooms when the company was assembled at the breakfast hour, and had just taken his hat to set out, when he was interrupted by Mrs Dods, who, announcing "a gentleman that was speering for him," ushered into the chamber a very fashionable young man in a military surtout, covered with silk lace and fur, and wearing a foraging-cap; a dress now too familiar to be distinguished, but which at that time was used only by geniuses of a superior order. The stranger was neither handsome nor plain, but had in his appearance a good deal of pretension, and the cool easy superiority which belongs to high breeding. On his part, he surveyed Tyrrel; and, as his appearance differed, perhaps, from that for which the exterior of the Cleikum Inn had prepared him, he abated something of the air with which he had entered the room, and politely announced himself as Captain Jekyl, of the —— Guards, (presenting, at the same time, his ticket.)

"He presumed he spoke to Mr Martigny."

"To Mr Francis Tyrrel, sir," replied Tyrrel,

drawing himself up—"Martigny was my mother's name—I have never borne it."

"I am not here for the purpose of disputing that point, Mr Tyrrel, though I am not entitled to admit what my principal's information leads him to doubt."

"Your principal, I presume, is Sir Bingo Binks?" said Tyrrel. "I have not forgotten that there is an unfortunate affair between us."

"I have not the honour to know Sir Bingo Binks," said Captain Jekyl. "I come on the part of the Earl of Etherington."

Tyrrel stood silent for a moment, and then said, "I am at a loss to know what the gentleman who calls himself Earl of Etherington can have to say to me, through the medium of such a messenger as yourself, Captain Jekyl. I should have supposed that, considering our unhappy relationship, and the terms on which we stand towards each other, the lawyers were the fitter negotiators between us."

"Sir," said Captain Jekyl, "you are misunderstanding my errand. I am come on no message of hostile import from Lord Etherington—I am aware of the connection betwixt you, which

would render such an office altogether contradictory to common sense and the laws of nature; and I assure you, I would lay down my life rather than be concerned in an affair so unnatural. I would act, if possible, as a mediator betwixt you."

They had hitherto remained standing. Mr Tyrrel now offered his guest a seat; and, having assumed one himself, he broke the awkward pause which ensued by observing, "I should be happy, after experiencing such a long course of injustice and persecution from your friend, to learn, even at this late period, Captain Jekyl, anything which can make me think better either of him or of his purpose towards me and towards others."

"Mr Tyrrel," said Captain Jekyl, "you must allow me to speak with candour. There is too great a stake betwixt your brother and you to permit you to be friends; but I do not see it is necessary that you should therefore be mortal enemies."

"I am not my brother's enemy, Captain Jekyl," said Tyrrel—"I have never been so—His friend I cannot be, and he knows but too well

the insurmountable barrier which his own conduct has placed between us."

"I am aware," said Captain Jekyl, slowly and expressively, "generally, at least, of the particulars of your unfortunate disagreement."

"If so," said Tyrrel, colouring, "you must be also aware with what extreme pain I feel myself compelled to enter on such a subject with a total stranger—a stranger, too, the friend and confidant of one who——But I will not hurt your feelings, Captain Jekyl, but rather endeavour to suppress my own. In one word, I beg to be favoured with the import of your communication, as I am obliged to go down to the Spa this morning, in order to put to rights some matters there which concern me nearly."

"If you mean the cause of your absence from an appointment with Sir Bingo Binks," said Captain Jekyl, "the matter has been already completely explained. I pulled down the offensive placard with my own hand, and rendered myself responsible for your honour to any one who should presume to hold it in future doubt."

"Sir," said Tyrrel, very much surprised, "I am obliged to you for your intention, the more so as I am ignorant how I have merited such interference. It is not, however, quite satisfactory to me, because I am accustomed to be the guardian of my own honour."

"An easy task, I presume, in all cases, Mr Tyrrel," answered Jekyl, "but peculiarly so in the present, when you will find no one so hardy as to assail it.—My interference, indeed, would have been unjustifiably officious, had I not been at the moment undertaking a commission implying confidential intercourse with you. For the sake of my own character, it became necessary to establish yours. I know the truth of the whole affair from my friend, the Earl of Etherington, who ought to thank Heaven so long as he lives, that saved him on that occasion from the commission of a very great crime."

"Your friend, sir, has had, in the course of his life, much to thank Heaven for, but more for which to ask God's forgiveness."

"I am no divine, sir," replied Captain Jekyl,

with spirit; "but I have been told that the same may be said of most men alive."

"I, at least, cannot dispute it," said Tyrrel; "but, to proceed.—Have you found yourself at liberty, Captain Jekyl, to deliver to the public the whole particulars of a rencontre so singular as that which took place between your friend and me?"

"I have not, sir," said Jekyl—"I judged it a matter of great delicacy, and which each of you had the like interest to preserve secret."

"May I beg to know, then," said Tyrrel, "how it was possible for you to vindicate my absence from Sir Bingo's rendezvous otherwise?"

"It was only necessary, sir, to pledge my word as a gentleman and man of honour, characters in which I am pretty well known to the world, that, to my certain personal knowledge, you were hurt in an affair with a friend of mine, the further particulars of which prudence required should be sunk into oblivion. I think no one will venture to dispute my word, or to require more than my assurance—If there should

be any one very hard of faith on the occasion, I shall find a way to satisfy him. In the mean-while, your outlawry has been rescinded in the most honourable manner; and Sir Bingo, in consideration of his share in giving rise to reports so injurious to you, is desirous to drop all further proceedings in his original quarrel, and hopes the whole matter will be forgot and forgiven on all sides."

"Upon my word, Captain Jekyl," answered Tyrrel, "you lay me under the necessity of acknowledging obligation to you. You have cut a knot which I should have found it very difficult to unloose; for I frankly confess, that, while I was determined not to remain under the stigma put upon me, I should have had great difficulty in clearing myself, without mentioning circumstances, which, were it only for the sake of our father's memory, should be buried in eternal oblivion. I hope your friend feels no continued inconvenience from his hurt?"

"His lordship is nearly quite recovered," said Jekyl.

" And I trust he did me the justice to own, that, so far as my will was concerned, I am totally guiltless of the purpose of hurting him?"

" He does you full justice in that and everything else," replied Jekyl; " regrets the impetuosity of his own temper, and is determined to be on his guard against it in future."

" That," said Tyrrel, " is so far well; and now, may I ask once more, what communication you have to make to me on the part of your friend?—Were it from any one but him, whom I have found so uniformly false and treacherous, your own fairness and candour would induce me to hope that this unnatural quarrel might be in some sort ended by your mediation."

" I then proceed, sir, under more favourable auspices than I expected," said Captain Jekyl, " to enter on my commission.—You are about to commence a law-suit, Mr Tyrrel, if Fame does not wrong you, for the purpose of depriving your brother of his estate and title."

" The case is not fairly stated, Captain Jekyl," replied Tyrrel; " I commence a lawsuit,

when I do commence it, for the sake of ascertaining my own just rights."

"It comes to the same thing eventually," said the mediator; "I am not called upon to decide upon the justice of your claims, but they are, you will allow, newly started. The late Countess of Etherington died in possession—open and undoubted possession—of her rank in society."

"If she had no real claim to it, sir," replied Tyrrel, "she had more than justice who enjoyed it so long; and the injured lady whose claims were postponed, had just so much less.—But this is no point for you and me to discuss between us—it must be tried elsewhere."

"Proofs, sir, of the strongest kind, will be necessary to overthrow a right so well established in public opinion, as that of the present possessor of the title of Etherington."

Tyrrel took a paper from his pocket-book, and handing it to Captain Jekyl, only answered, "I have no thoughts of asking you to give up the cause of your friend; but methinks the documents of which I give you a list, may shake your opinion of it."

Captain Jekyl read, muttering to himself, "'*Certificate of marriage, by the Rev. Zadock Kemp, chaplain to the British Embassy at Paris, between Marie de Bellroche, Comptesse de Martigny, and the Right Honourable John Lord Oakendale—Letters between John Earl of Etherington and his lady, under the title of Madame de Martigny—Certificate of baptism—Declaration of the Earl of Etherington on his death-bed.*' —All this is very well—but may I ask you, Mr Tyrrel, if it is really your purpose to go to extremity with your brother?"

"He has forgot that he is one—he has lifted his hand against my life."

"You have shed his blood—twice shed it," said Jekyl; "the world will not ask which brother gave the offence, but which received, which inflicted, the severest wound."

"Your friend has inflicted one on me, sir," said Tyrrel, "that will bleed while I have the power of memory."

"I understand you, sir," said Captain Jekyl; "you mean the affair of Miss Mowbray?"

" Spare me on that subject, sir!" said Tyrrel. " Hitherto I have disputed my most important rights—rights which involved my rank in society, my fortune, the honour of my mother, with something like compo sure but do not say more on the topic you have touched upon, unless you would have before you a madman!—Is it possible for you, sir, to have heard even the outline of this story, and to imagine that I can ever reflect on the cold-blooded and most inhuman stratagem, which this friend of yours prepared for two unfortunates, without ——" He started up, and walked impetuously to and fro. " Since the Fiend himself interrupted the happiness of perfect innocence, there was never such an act of treachery—never such schemes of happiness destroyed—never such inevitable misery prepared for two wretches who had the ideocy to repose perfect confidence in him!—Had there been passion in his conduct, it had been the act of a man —a wicked man, indeed, but still a human creature, acting under the influence of human passions—but his was the deed of a calm, cold, calculating demon, actuated by the basest and most

sordid motives of self-interest, joined, as I firmly believe, to an early and inveterate hatred of one whose claims he considered as at variance with his own."

"I am sorry to see you in such a temper," said Captain Jekyl, calmly; "Lord Etherington, I trust, acted on very different motives than those you impute to him; and if you will but listen to me, perhaps something may be struck out which may accommodate these unhappy disputes."

"Sir," said Tyrrel, sitting down again, "I will listen to you with calmness, as I would remain calm under the probe of a surgeon tenting a festered wound. But when you touch me to the quick, when you prick the very nerve, you cannot expect me to endure without wincing."

"I will endeavour, then, to be as brief in the operation as I can," replied Captain Jekyl, who possessed the advantage of the most admirable composure during the whole conference. "I conclude, Mr Tyrrel, that the peace, happiness, and honour of Miss Mowbray are dear to you?"

"Who dare impeach her honour!" said Tyrrel, fiercely; then checking himself, added, in a more moderate tone, but one of deep feeling, "They are dear to me, sir, as my eye-sight."

"My friend holds them in equal regard," said the Captain; "and has come to the resolution of doing her the most ample justice."

"He can do her justice no otherwise, than by ceasing to haunt this neighbourhood, to think, to speak, even to dream of her."

"Lord Etherington thinks otherwise," said Captain Jekyl; "he believes that if Miss Mowbray has sustained any wrong at his hands, which, of course, I am not called upon to admit, it will be best repaired by the offer to share with her his title, his rank, and his fortune."

"His title, rank, and fortune, sir, are as much a falsehood as he is himself," said Tyrrel, with violence—"Marry Clara Mowbray? never!"

"My friend's fortune, you will observe," replied Jekyl, "does not rest entirely upon the event of the law-suit with which you, Mr Tyrrel, now threaten him.—Deprive him, if you can, of the Oakendale estate, he has still a large pa-

trimony by his mother; and besides, as to his marriage with Clara Mowbray, he conceives, that unless it should be the lady's wish to have the ceremony repeated, to which he is most desirous to defer his own opinion, they have only to declare that it has already passed between them."

"A trick, sir!" said Tyrrel, "a vile, infamous trick! of which the lowest wretch in Newgate would be ashamed—the imposition of one person for another."

"Of that, Mr Tyrrel, I have seen no evidence whatsoever. The clergyman's certificate is clear—Francis Tyrrel is united to Clara Mowbray in the holy bands of wedlock—such is the tenor—there is a copy—nay, stop one instant, if you please, sir. You say there was an imposition in the case—I have no doubt but you speak what you believe, and what Miss Mowbray told you. She was surprised—forced in some measure from the husband she had just married—ashamed to meet her former lover, to whom, doubtless, she had made many a vow of love, and ne'er a true one—what wonder that, unsupported by her

bridegroom, she should have changed her tone, and thrown all the blame of her own inconstancy on the absent swain?—A woman, at a pinch so critical, will make the most improbable excuse, rather than be found guilty on her own confession."

"There must be no jesting in this case," said Tyrrel, his cheek becoming pale, and his voice altered with passion.

"I am quite serious, sir," replied Jekyl; "and there is no law court in Britain that would take the lady's word—all she has to offer, and that in her own cause—against a whole body of evidence, direct and circumstantial, shewing that she was by her own free consent married to the gentleman who now claims her hand.—Forgive me, sir—I see you are much agitated—I do not mean to dispute your right of believing what you think is most credible—I only use the freedom of pointing out to you the impression which the evidence is likely to make on the minds of indifferent persons."

"Your friend," answered Tyrrel, affecting a

composure, which, however, he was far from possessing, "may think by such arguments to screen his villainy; but it cannot avail him—the truth is known to Heaven—it is known to me—and there is, besides, one indifferent witness upon earth, who can testify that the most abominable imposition was practised on Miss Mowbray."

"You mean her cousin,—Hannah Irwin, I think, is her name," answered Jekyl; "you see I am fully acquainted with all the circumstances of the case. But where is Hannah Irwin to be found?"

"She will appear, doubtless, in Heaven's good time, and to the confusion of him who now imagines the only witness of his treachery—the only one who could tell the truth of this complicated mystery—either no longer lives, or, at least, cannot be brought forward against him, to the ruin of his schemes. Yes, sir, that slight observation of yours has more than explained to me why your friend, or, to call him by his true name, Mr Valentine Bulmer, has not commen-

ced his machinations sooner, and also why he has commenced them now. He thinks himself certain that Hannah Irwin is not now in Britain, or to be produced in a court of justice—he may find himself mistaken."

"My friend seems perfectly confident of the issue of his cause," answered Jekyl; "but for the lady's sake, he is most unwilling to prosecute a suit which must be attended with so many circumstances of painful exposure."

"Exposure, indeed!" answered Tyrrel; "thanks to the traitor who laid a mine so fearful, and who now affects to be reluctant to fire it.—Oh! how I am bound to curse that affinity that restrains my hands! I would be content to be the meanest and vilest of society, for one hour of vengeance on this unexampled hypocrite!—One thing is certain, sir—your friend will have no living victim. His persecution will kill Clara Mowbray, and fill up the cup of his crimes, with the murder of one of the sweetest——I shall grow a woman, if I say more on the subject!"

"My friend," said Jekyl, "since you like best to have him so defined, is as desirous as you can be to spare the lady's feelings; and with that view, not reverting to former passages, he has laid before her brother a proposal of alliance, with which Mr Mowbray is highly pleased."

"Ha!" said Tyrrel, starting—"And the lady?"—

"And the lady has so far proved favourable, as to consent that Lord Etherington shall visit Shaws Castle."

"Her consent must have been extorted!" exclaimed Tyrrel.

"It was given voluntarily," said Jekyl, "as I am led to understand; unless, perhaps, in so far as the desire to veil these very unpleasing transactions may have operated, I think naturally enough, to induce her to sink them in eternal secrecy, by accepting Lord Etherington's hand. —I see, sir, I give you pain, and I am sorry for it.—I have no title to call upon you for any exertion of generosity; but, should such be Miss Mowbray's sentiments, is it too much to expect

of you, that you will not compromise the lady's honour by insisting upon former claims, and opening up disreputable transactions so long past?"

"Captain Jekyl," said Tyrrel, solemnly, "I have no claims. Whatever I might have had, were cancelled by the act of treachery through which your friend endeavoured too successfully to supplant me. Were Clara Mowbray as free from her pretended marriage as law could pronounce her, still with me—*me*, at least, of all men in the world—the obstacle must ever remain, that the nuptial benediction has been pronounced over her, and the man whom I must for once call *brother*.—" He stopped at that word, as if it had cost him agony to pronounce it, and then resumed:—"No, sir, I have no views of personal advantage in this matter—they have been long annihilated—But I will not permit Clara Mowbray to become the wife of a villain—I will watch over her with thoughts as spotless as those of her guardian angel. I have been the cause of all the evil she has sustained—I first persuaded her to quit the path of duty—I, of all men who live, m bound

to protect her from the misery—from the guilt—which must attach to her as this man's wife. I will never believe that she wishes it—I will never believe, that in calm mind and sober reason, she can be brought to listen to such a guilty proposal.—But her mind—alas!—is not of the firm texture it once could boast; and your friend knows well how to press on the spring of every passion that can agitate and alarm her. Threats of exposure may extort her consent to this most unfitting match, if they do not indeed drive her to suicide, which, I think, the most likely termination. I will therefore be strong where she is weak.—Your friend, sir, must at least strip his proposals of their fine gilding. I will satisfy Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's of his false pretences, both to rank and fortune; and I rather think he will protect his sister against the claim of a needy profligate, though he might be dazzled with the alliance of a wealthy peer."

"Your cause, sir, is not yet won," answered Jekyl; "and when it is, your brother will retain property enough to entitle him to marry a greater match than Miss Mowbray, besides the large

estate of Nettlewood, to which that alliance must give him right. But I would wish to make some accommodation between you if it were possible. You profess, Mr Tyrrel, to lay aside all selfish wishes and views in this matter, and to look entirely to Miss Mowbray's safety and happiness?"

"Such, upon my honour, is the exclusive purpose of my interference—I would give all I am worth to procure her an hour of quiet—for happiness she will never know again."

"Your anticipations of Miss Mowbray's distress," said Jekyl, "are, I understand, founded upon the character of my friend. You think him a man of light principle, and because he overreached you in a juvenile intrigue, you conclude that now, in his more steady and advanced years, the happiness of the lady in whom you are so much interested ought not to be trusted to him?"

"There may be other grounds," said Tyrrel, hastily; "but you may argue upon those you have named, as sufficient to warrant my interference."

"How, then, if I should propose some accommodation of this nature? Lord Etherington does

not pretend to the ardour of a passionate lover. He lives much in the world, and has no desire to quit it. Miss Mowbray's health is delicate—her spirits variable—and retirement would most probably be her choice.—Suppose—I am barely putting a supposition—suppose that a marriage between two persons so circumstanced were rendered necessary or advantageous to both—suppose that such a marriage were to secure to one party a large estate—were to insure the other against all the consequences of an unpleasant exposure—still, both ends might be obtained by the mere ceremony of marriage passing between them. There might be a previous contract of separation, with suitable provisions for the lady, and stipulations, by which the husband should renounce all claim to her society. Such things happen every season, if not on the very marriage day, yet before the honey-moon is over.—Wealth and freedom would be the lady's, and as much rank as you, sir, supposing your claims just, may think proper to leave them."

There was a long pause, during which Tyrrel underwent many changes of countenance, which

Jekyl watched carefully, without pressing him for an answer. At length he replied, "There is much in your proposal, Captain Jekyl, which I might be tempted to accede to, as one manner of unloosing this Gordian knot, and a compromise by which Miss Mowbray's future tranquillity would be in some degree provided for. But I would rather trust a fanged adder than your friend, unless I saw him fettered by the strongest ties of interest. Besides, I am certain the unhappy lady could never survive the being connected with him in this manner, though but for the single moment when they should appear together at the altar. There are other objections——"

He checked himself, paused, and then proceeded in a calm and self-possessed tone. "You think, perhaps, even yet, that I have some selfish and interested views in this business; and probably you may feel yourself entitled to entertain the same suspicion towards me, which I avowedly harbour respecting every proposition which originates with your friend.—I cannot help it—I can but meet these disadvantageous impressions with plain-dealing and honesty; and it is in the

spirit of both that *I* make a proposition to *you.* —Your friend is attached to rank, fortune, and worldly advantages, in the usual proportion at least in which they are pursued by men of the world—this you must admit, and I will not offend you by supposing more."

"I know few people who do not desire such advantages," answered Captain Jekyl; "and I frankly own, that he affects no particular degree of philosophic indifference respecting them."

"Be it so," answered Tyrrel. "Indeed, the proposal you have just made indicates that his pretended claim on this young lady's hand is entirely, or almost entirely, dictated by motives of interest, since you are of opinion that he would be contented to separate from her society on the very marriage-day, provided that, in doing so, he was assured of the Nettlewood property."

"My proposition was unauthorized by my principal," answered Jekyl; "but it is needless to deny, that its very tenor implies an idea, on my part, that Lord Etherington is no passionate lover."

"Well then," answered Tyrrel. "Consider, sir, and let him consider well, that the estate and rank he now assumes depend upon my will and pleasure—that, if I prosecute the claims of which that scroll makes you aware, he must descend from the rank of an earl into that of a commoner, stripped of by much the better half of his fortune—a diminution which would be far from compensated by the estate of Nettlewood, even if he could obtain it, which could only be by means of a law-suit, precarious in the issue, and most dishonourable in its very essence."

"Well, sir," replied Jekyl, "I perceive your argument—What is your proposal?"

"That I will abstain from prosecuting my claim on those honours and that property—that I will leave Valentine Bulmer in possession of his usurped title and ill-deserved wealth—that I will bind myself under the strongest penalties never to disturb his possession of the Earldom of Etherington, and estates belonging to it—on condition that he allows the woman, whose peace of mind he has ruined for ever, to walk through the world in her wretchedness, undisturbed either

by his marriage-suit, or by any claim founded upon his own most treacherous conduct—in short, that he forbear to molest Clara Mowbray, either by his presence, word, letter, or through the intervention of a third party, and be to her in future as if he did not exist."

"This is a singular offer," said the Captain; "may I ask if you are serious in making it?"

"I am neither surprised nor offended at the question," said Tyrrel. "I am a man, sir, like others, and affect no superiority to that which all men desire the possession of—a certain consideration and station in society. I am no romantic fool, to undervalue the sacrifice I am about to make. I renounce a rank, which is and ought to be the more valuable to me, because it involves (he blushed as he spoke) the fame of an honoured mother—because, in failing to claim it, I disobey the commands of a dying father, who wished that by doing so I should declare to the world the penitence which hurried him perhaps to the grave, and the making which public he considered might be some atonement for his errors. From an honoured place in the land, I descend voluntarily to become a nameless

exile; for, once certain that Clara Mowbray's peace is assured, Britain no longer holds me.—All this I do, sir, not in any idle strain of overheated feeling, but seeing, and knowing, and dearly valuing, every advantage which I renounce—yet I do it, and do it willingly, rather than be the cause of further evil to one, on whom I have already brought too—too much."

His voice, in spite of his exertions, faultered as he concluded the sentence, and a big drop which rose to his eye, required him for the moment to turn towards the window.

"I am ashamed of this childishness," he said, turning again to Captain Jekyl; "if it excites your ridicule, sir, let it be at least a proof of my sincerity."

"I am far from entertaining such sentiments," said Jekyl, respectfully—for, in a long train of fashionable follies, his heart had not been utterly hardened—"very far indeed. To a proposal so singular as yours, I cannot be expected to answer—except thus far—the character of the peerage is, I believe, indelible, and cannot be resigned or assumed at pleasure. If you are really

Earl of Etherington, I cannot see how your resigning the right may avail my friend."

"You, sir, it might not avail," said Tyrrel, gravely, "because you, perhaps, might scorn to exercise a right, or hold a title, that was not legally yours. But your friend will have no such compunctious visitings. If he can act the Earl to the eye of the world, he has already shewn that his honour and conscience will be easily satisfied."

"May I take a copy of the memorandum, containing this list of documents," said Captain Jekyl, "for the information of my constituent?"

"The paper is at your pleasure, sir," replied Tyrrel; "it is itself but a copy.—But, Captain Jekyl," he added, with a sarcastic expression, "is, it would seem, but imperfectly let into his friend's confidence—he may be assured his principal is completely acquainted with the contents of this paper, and has accurate copies of the deeds to which it refers."

"I think it scarce possible," said Jekyl, angrily.

"Possible and certain!" answered Tyrrel "My father, shortly preceding his death, sent me—with a most affecting confession of his errors—this list of papers, and acquainted me that he had made a similar communication to your friend. That he did so I have no doubt, however Mr Bulmer may have thought proper to disguise the circumstance in communication with you. One circumstance, among others, stamps at once his character, and confirms me of the danger he apprehended by my return to Britain. He found means, through a scoundrelly agent, who had made me the usual remittances from my father while alive, to withhold those which were necessary for my return from the Levant, and I was obliged to borrow from a friend."

"Indeed?" replied Jekyl. "It is the first time I have heard of these papers—May I inquire where the originals are, and in whose custody?"

"I was in the East," answered Tyrrel, "during my father's last illness, and these papers were by him deposited with a respectable commercial house, with which he was connected.

They were enclosed in a cover directed to me, and that again in an envelope, addressed to the principal person in their firm."

"You must be sensible," said Captain Jekyl, "that I can scarcely decide on the extraordinary offer which you have been pleased to make, of resigning the claim founded on these documents, unless I had a previous opportunity of examining them."

"You shall have that opportunity—I will write to have them sent down by the post—they lie but in small compass."

"This, then," said the Captain, "sums up all that can be said at present.—Supposing these proofs to be of unexceptionable authenticity, I certainly would advise my friend Etherington to put to sleep a claim so important as yours, even at the expense of resigning his matrimonial speculation—I presume you design to abide by your offer?"

"I am not in the habit of altering my mind—still less of retracting my word," said Tyrrel, somewhat haughtily.

"We part friends, I hope," said Jekyl, rising, and taking his leave.

"Not enemies certainly, Captain Jekyl. I will own to you I owe you my thanks, for extricating me from that foolish affair at the Well—nothing could have put me to more inconvenience than the necessity of following to extremity a frivolous quarrel at the present moment."

"You will come down among us then?" said Jekyl.

"I certainly shall not wish to seem to hide myself," answered Tyrrel; "it is a circumstance might be turned against me—I have a party who will avail himself of every advantage. I have but one path, Captain Jekyl—that of truth and honour."

Captain Jekyl bowed, and took his leave. So soon as he was gone, Tyrrel locked the door of the apartment, and drawing from his bosom a portrait, gazed on it with a mixture of sorrow and tenderness, until the tears dropped from his eye.

It was the picture of Clara Mowbray, such as

he had known her in the days of their youthful love, and taken by himself, whose early turn for painting had already developed itself. The features of the blooming girl might be yet traced in the fine countenance of the more matured original. But what was now become of the glow which had shaded her cheek?—what of the arch, yet subdued pleasantry, which lurked in the eye?—what of the joyous content, which composed every feature to the expression of an Euphrosyne?—Alas! these were long fled!—Sorrow had laid his hand upon her—the purple light of youth was quenched—the glance of innocent gaiety was exchanged for looks now moody with ill concealed care, now animated by a spirit of reckless and satirical observation.

"What a wreck! what a wreck!" exclaimed Tyrrel; "and all of one wretch's making.—Can I put the last hand to the work, and be her murderer outright? I cannot—I cannot!—I will be strong in the resolve I have formed—I will sacrifice all—rank—station—fortune—and fame. Revenge!—revenge itself, the last good left me—revenge itself I will sacrifice to obtain her

such tranquillity as she may be yet capable to enjoy."

In this resolution he sat down, and wrote a letter to the commercial house with whom the documents of his birth, and other relative papers, were deposited, requesting that the packet containing them should be forwarded to him through the post-office.

Tyrrel was neither unambitious, nor without those sentiments respecting personal consideration, which are usually united with deep feeling and an ardent mind. It was with a trembling hand, and a watery eye, but with a heart firmly resolved, that he sealed and dispatched the letter; a step towards the resignation, in favour of his mortal enemy, of that rank and condition in life, which was his own by right of inheritance, but had so long hung in doubt betwixt them.

CHAPTER IV.

INTRUSION.

By my troth, I will go with thee to the lane's-end!—I am a kind of burr—I shall stick.

Measure for Measure.

It was now far advanced in autumn. The dew lay thick on the long grass, where it was touched by the sun; but where the sward lay in shadow, it was covered with hoar frost, and crisped under Jekyl's foot, as he returned through the woods of St Ronan's. The leaves of the ash trees detached themselves from the branches, and without an air of wind fell spontaneously on the path. The mists still lay lazily upon the heights, and the huge old tower of St Ronan's was entirely shrouded with vapour, excepting where a sun-

beam, struggling with the mist, penetrated into its wreath so far as to shew a projecting turret upon one of the angles of the old fortress, which, long a favourite haunt of the raven, was popularly called the Corbie's Tower. Beneath, the scene was open and lightsome, and the robin redbreast was chirping his best, to atone for the absence of all other choristers. The fine foliage of autumn was seen in many a glade, running up the sides of each little ravine, russet-hued and golden-specked, and tinged frequently with the red hues of the mountain-ash; while here and there a huge old fir, the native growth of the soil, flung his broad shadow over the rest of the trees, and seemed to exult in the permanence of his dusky livery over the more showy, but transitory brilliance by which he was surrounded.

Such is the scene, which, so often described in prose and in poetry, yet seldom loses its effect upon the ear or upon the eye, and through which we wander with a strain of mind congenial to the decline of the year. There are few who do not feel the impression; and even Jekyl, though

bred to far different pursuits than those most favourable to such contemplation, relaxed his pace to admire the uncommon beauty of the landscape.

Perhaps, also, he was in no hurry to rejoin the Earl of Etherington, towards whose service he felt himself more disinclined since his interview with Tyrrel. It was clear that nobleman had not fully reposed in his friend the confidence promised; he had not made him aware of the existence of those important documents of proof, on which the whole fate of his negotiation appeared now to hinge, and in so far had deceived him. Yet, when he pulled from his pocket, and re-read Lord Etherington's explanatory letter, he could not help being more sensible than he had been on the first perusal, how much the present possessor of that title felt alarmed at his brother's claims; and he had some compassion for the natural feeling that must have rendered him shy of communicating at once the very worst view of his case, even to his most confidential friend. Upon the whole, he remembered that Lord Ethe-

rington had been his benefactor to an unusual extent; that he had promised him his active and devoted assistance, in extricating him from the difficulties with which he seemed at present surrounded; that, in quality of his confidant, he had become acquainted with the most secret transactions of his life; and that it could only be some very strong cause indeed, which could justify breaking off from him at this moment. Yet he could not help wishing either that his own obligations had been less, his friend's cause better, or, at least, the friend himself more worthy of assistance.

"A beautiful morning, sir, for such a foggy, d—d climate as this?" said a voice close by Jekyl's ear, which made him at once start out of his contemplation. He turned half round, and beside him stood our honest friend Touchwood, his throat muffled in his large Indian handkerchief, huge gouty shoes thrust upon his feet, his bob-wig well powdered, and his gold-headed cane in his hand, carried upright as a serjeant's halbert. One glance of contemptuous survey

entitled Jekyl, according to his modish ideas, to rank the old gentleman as a regular-built Quiz, and to treat him as gentlemen of his Majesty's Guards think themselves entitled to use every unfashionable variety of the human species. A slight inclination of a bow, and a very cold "You have the advantage of me, sir," dropped as it were unconsciously from his tongue, were meant to repress the old gentleman's advances, and moderate his ambition to be hail fellow well met with his betters. But Mr Touchwood was callous to the intended rebuke; he had lived too much at large upon the world, and was far too confident of his own merits to take a repulse easily, or to permit his modesty to interfere with any purpose which he had formed.

"Advantage of you, sir?" he replied; "I have lived too long in the world not to keep all the advantages I have, and get all I can—and I reckon it one that I have overtaken you, and shall have the pleasure of your company to the Well."

"I should but interrupt your worthier medita-

tions, sir," said the other; "besides, I am a modest young man, and think myself fit for no better company than my own—moreover, I walk slow—very slow.—Good morning to you, Mr A—A—I believe my treacherous memory has let slip your name, sir."

"My name!—Why, your memory must have been like Pat Murtough's greyhound, that let the hare go before he caught it. You never heard my name in your life. Touchwood is my name. What d'ye think of it, now you know it?"

"I am really no connoisseur in surnames," answered Jekyl; "and it is quite the same to me whether you call yourself Touchwood or Touchstone. Don't let me keep you from walking on, sir. You will find breakfast far advanced at the Well, sir, and your walk has probably given you an appetite."

"Which will serve me to luncheon-time, I promise you," said Touchwood; "I always drink my coffee so soon as my feet are in my pabouches—it's the way all over the East. Ne-

ver trust my breakfast to their scalding milk and water at the Well, I assure you; and for walking slow, I have had a touch of the gout."

"Have you?" said Jekyl; "I am sorry for that; because, if you have no mind to breakfast, I have—and so, Mr Touchstone, good morrow to you."

But, although the young soldier went off at double quick time, his pertinacious attendant kept close by his side, displaying an activity which seemed inconsistent with his make and his years, and talking away the whole time, so as to shew that his lungs were not in the least degree incommoded by the unusual rapidity of motion.

"Nay, young gentleman, if you are for a good smart walk, I am for you, and the gout may be d—d. You are a lucky fellow, to have youth on your side; but yet, so far as between the Aultoun and the Well, I think I could walk you for your sum, barring running—all heel and toe—equal weight, and I would match Barclay himself for a mile."

"Upon my word, you are a gay old gentle-

man !" said Jekyl, relaxing his pace; "and if we must be fellow-travellers, though I can see no great occasion for it, I must even shorten sail for you."

So saying, and as if another means of deliverance had occurred to him, he slackened his pace, took out an ivory case of segars, and, lighting one with his *briquet*, said, while he walked on, and bestowed as much of its fragrance as he could upon the face of his intrusive companion, "Vergeben sie mein herr—ich bin erzogen in kaiserlicher dienst—muss rauchen ein kleine wenig."

"Rauchen sie immer fort," said Touchwood, producing a huge meerschaum, which, suspended by a chain from his neck, lurked in the bosom of his coat, "habe auch mein pfeichen—Sehen sie den lieben topf;" and he began to return the smoke, if not the fire, of his companion, in full volumes, and with interest.

"The devil take the twaddle," said Jekyl to himself, "he is too old and too fat to be treated after the manner of Professor Jackson; and, on

my life, I cannot tell what to make of him.—He is a residenter too—I must tip him the cold shoulder, or he will be pestering me eternally."

Accordingly, he walked on, sucking his segar, and apparently in as abstracted a mood as Mr Cargill himself, without paying the least attention to Touchwood, who, nevertheless, continued talking, as if he had been addressing the most attentive listener in Scotland, whether it were the favourite nephew of a cross, old, rich bachelor, or the aid-de-camp of some old, rusty, firelock of a general, who tells stories of the American war.

"And so, sir, I can put up with any companion at a pinch, for I have travelled in all sort of ways, from a caravan down to a carrier's cart; but the best society is the best everywhere; and I am happy I have fallen in with a gentleman who suits me so well as you.—That grave, steady attention reminds me of Elfi Bey—you might talk to him in English, or anything he understood least of—you might have read Aristotle to Elfi, and not a muscle would he stir—give him his

pipe, and he would sit on his cushion as if he took in every word of what you said."

Captain Jekyl threw away the remnant of his segar, with a little movement of pettishness, and began to whistle an opera air.

"There again, now!—That is just so like the Marquis, another dear friend of mine, that whistles all the time you talk to him—He says he learned it in the reign of terror, when a man was glad to whistle to shew his throat was whole.—And, talking of great folks, what do you think of this affair between Lord Etherington and his brother, or cousin, as some folks call him?"

Jekyl absolutely started at the question; a degree of emotion, which, had it been witnessed by any of his fashionable friends, would for ever have ruined his pretensions to rank in their first order.

"What affair?" he asked, so soon as he could command a certain degree of composure.

"Why, you know the news surely? Francis Tyrrel, whom all the company voted a coward the other day, turns out as brave a fellow as any

of us; for, instead of having run away to avoid having his own throat cut by Sir Bingo Binks, he was at the very moment engaged in a gallant attempt to murder his elder brother, or his more lawful brother, or his cousin, or some such near relation."

"I believe you are misinformed, sir," said Jekyl dryly, and then resumed, as deftly as he could, his proper character of a pococurante.

"I am told," continued Touchwood, "one Jekyl acted as a second to them both on the occasion—a proper fellow, sir—one of those fine gentlemen whom we pay for polishing the pavement in Bond Street, and looking at a thick shoe and a pair of worsted stockings, as if the wearer were none of their paymasters. However, I believe the Commander-in-Chief is like to discard him when he hears what has happened."

"Sir!" said Jekyl, fiercely—then, recollecting the folly of being angry with an original of his companion's description, he proceeded more coolly, "You are misinformed—Captain Jekyl knew nothing of any such matter as you refer to—you talk of a person you know nothing of—Captain

Jekyl is ——" (Here he stopped a little, scandalized, perhaps, at the very idea of vindicating himself to such a personage from such a charge.)

" Ay, ay," said the traveller, filling up the chasm in his own way; " he is not worth our talking of, certainly—but I believe he knew as much of the matter as either you or I do, for all that."

" Sir, this is either a very great mistake, or wilful impertinence. However absurd or intrusive you may be, I cannot allow you, either in ignorance or incivility, to use the name of Captain Jekyl with disrespect.—I am Captain Jekyl, sir."

" Very like, very like," said Touchwood, with the most provoking indifference; " I guessed as much before."

" Then, sir, you may guess what is likely to follow, when a gentleman hears himself unwarrantably and unjustly slandered," replied Captain Jekyl, surprised and provoked that his annunciation of name and rank seemed to be treated so lightly. " I advise you, sir, not to proceed

too far upon the immunity of your age and insignificance."

"I never presume farther than I have good reason to think necessary, Captain Jekyl," answered Touchwood, with great composure. "I am too old, as you say, for any such idiotical business as a duel, which no nation I know of practises but our silly fools of Europe—and then, as for your switch, which you are grasping with so much dignity, that is totally out of the question. Look you, young gentleman; four-fifths of my life have been spent among men who do not set a man's life at the value of a button on his collar—every man learns, in such cases, to protect himself as he can; and whoever strikes me must stand to the consequences. I have always a brace of bull-dogs about me, which put age and youth on a level."

So saying, he exhibited a very handsome, highly-finished, and richly mounted pair of pistols.

"Catch me without my tools," said he, significantly buttoning his coat over the arms, which were concealed in a side-pocket, ingeniously contrived for that purpose. "I see you do not

know what to make of me," he continued, in a familiar and confidential tone; "but, to tell you the truth, everybody that has meddled in this St Ronan's business is a little off the hooks—something of a *tête exaltée*, in plain words, a little crazy, or so; and I do not affect to be much wiser than other people."

"Sir," said Jekyl, "your manners and discourse are so unprecedented, that I must ask your meaning plainly and decidedly—Do you mean to insult me, or no?"

"No insult at all, young gentleman—all fair meaning, and above board—I only wished to let you know what the world may say, that is all."

"Sir," said Jekyl, hastily, "the world may tell what lies it pleases; but I was not present at the rencontre between Etherington and Mr Tyrrel—I was some hundred miles off."

"There now," said Touchwood, "there *was* a rencontre between them—the very thing I wanted to know."

"Sir," said Jekyl, aware too late that, in his haste to vindicate himself, he had committed his friend, "I desire you will found nothing on an

expression hastily used to vindicate myself from a false aspersion—I only meant to say, if there was an affair such as you talk of, I knew nothing of it."

"Never mind—never mind—I shall make no bad use of what I have learned," said Touchwood; "were you to eat your words with the best fish-sauce, (and that is Burgess's,) I have got all the information from them I wanted."

"You are strangely pertinacious, sir," replied Jekyl.

"O, a rock, a piece of flint for that—What I have learned, I have learned, but I will make no bad use of it.—Hark ye, Captain, I have no malice against your friend—perhaps the contrary—but he is in a bad course, sir—has kept a false reckoning, for as deep as he thinks himself; and I tell you so, because I hold you (your finery out of the question) to be, as Hamlet says, indifferent honest; but, if you were not, why, necessity is necessity; and a man will take a Bedouin for his guide in the desert, whom he would not trust with an aspar in the cultivated field;

so I think of reposing some confidence in you—have not made up my mind yet, though."

"On my word, sir, I am greatly flattered, sir, both by your intentions and your hesitation," said Captain Jekyl. "You were pleased to say just now, that every one concerned with these matters was something particular."

"Ay, ay—something crazy—a little mad, or so. That was what I said, and I can prove it."

"I should be glad to hear the proof," said Jekyl—"I hope you do not except yourself?"

"Oh! by no means," answered Touchwood: "I am one of the maddest old boys ever slept out of straw, or went loose. But you can put fishing questions in your turn, Captain, I see that—you would fain know how much, or how little, I am in all these secrets. Well, that is as hereafter may be. In the meantime, here are my proofs.—Old Scroggie Mowbray was mad, to like the sound of Mowbray better than that of Scroggie; young Scroggie was mad, not to like it as well. The old Earl of Etherington was not sane when he married a French wife in secret, and devilish mad indeed when he married an English one in public. Then

for the good folks here, Mowbray of St Ronan's is cracked, when he wishes to give his sister to he knows not precisely whom: She is a fool not to take him, because she *does* know who he is, and what has been between them; and your friend is maddest of all, that seeks her under such a heavy penalty;—and you and I, Captain, go mad gratis, for company's sake, when we mix ourselves with such a mess of folly and frenzy."

"Really, sir, all that you have said is an absolute riddle to me."

"Riddles may be read," said Touchwood, nodding, "if you have any desire to read mine, pray, take notice, that this being our first interview, I have exerted myself *faire les frais de conversatione*, as Jack Frenchman says; if you want another, you may come to Mrs Dods's, at the Cleikum Inn, any day before Saturday, at four precisely, when you will find none of your half-starved, long-limbed bundles of bones, which you call poultry at the table d'hote, but a right Chitty-gong fowl—I got Mrs Dods the breed from old Ben Vandewash, the Dutch broker—stewed to a minute, with rice and mushrooms.—

If you can eat without a silver fork, and your appetite serves you, you shall be welcome—that's all.—So, good morning to you, good master lieutenant, for a captain of the Guards is but a lieutenant after all."

So saying, and ere Jekyl could make any answer, the old gentleman turned short off into a path which led to the healing fountain, branching away from that which conducted to the Hotel.

Uncertain with whom he had been holding a conversation so strange, Jekyl remained looking after him, until his attention was roused by a little boy, who crept out from an adjoining thicket, with a switch in his hand, which he had been just cutting,—probably against regulations to the contrary effect made and provided, for he held himself ready to take cover in the copse again, in case any one were in sight who might be interested in chastising his delinquency. Captain Jekyl easily recognized in him one of that hopeful class of imps, who pick up a precarious livelihood about places of public resort, by going errands, brushing shoes, doing the groom's and coachman's work in the stables, driving don-

kies, opening gates, and so forth, for about one-tenth part of their time, spending the rest in gambling, sleeping in the sun, and otherwise qualifying themselves to exercise the profession of thieves and pickpockets, either separately, or in conjunction with those of waiters, grooms, and postilions. The little outcast had an indifferent pair of pantaloons, and about half a jacket, for, like Pentapolin with the naked arm, he went on action with his right shoulder bare; a third part of what had once been a hat covered his hair, bleached white by the sun, and his face, as brown as a berry, was illumined by a pair of eyes, which, for spying out either peril or profit, might have rivalled those of the hawk.

"Come hither, ye unhanged whelp," said Jekyl, "and tell me if you know the old gentleman that passed down the walk just now—yonder he is, still in sight."

"It is the Naboab," said the boy; "I could swear to his back among all the backs at the Waal, your honour."

"What do you call a Nabob, you varlet?"

"A Naboab—a Naboab?" answered the scout; "odd, I believe it is ane comes frae foreign parts, with mair siller than his pouches can haud, and spills it a' through the country—they are as yellow as orangers, and maun hae a' thing their ain gate."

"And what is this Naboab's name, as you call him?" demanded Jekyl.

"His name is Touchwood," said his informer; "ye may see him at the Waal every morning."

"I have not seen him at the ordinary."

"Na, na," answered the boy; "he is a queer auld cull, he disna frequent wi' other folk, but lives up by at the Cleikum.—He gave me half a crown yince, and forbade me to play it awa' at pitch and toss."

"And you disobeyed him, of course?"

"Na, I didna dis-obeyed him—I plaid it awa' at neevie-neevie-nick-nack.'

"Well, there is sixpence for thee; lose it to the devil if thou think'st proper."

So saying, he gave the little galopin his donative, and a slight rap on the pate at the same

time, which sent him scouring from his presence. He himself hastened to Lord Etherington's apartments, and, as luck would have it, found the Earl alone.

CHAPTER V.

DISCUSSION.

I will converse with iron-witted clowns
And unrespective fools—none are for me
That look into me with suspicious eyes.

Richard III.

"How now, Jekyl!" said Lord Etherington, eagerly; "what news from the enemy?—Have you seen him?"

"I have," replied Jekyl.

"And in what humour did you find him?—in none that was very favourable, I dare say, for you have a baffled and perplexed look, that confesses a losing game—I have often warned you how your hang-dog look betrays you at brag—And then, when you would fain brush up your courage, and put a good face on a bad game, your bold looks always remind me of a standard

hoisted only half-mast high, and betraying melancholy and dejection, instead of triumph and defiance."

" I am only holding the cards for your lordship at present," answered Jekyl ; " and I wish to Heaven there may be no one looking over the hand."

" How do you mean by that ?"

" Why, I was beset, on returning through the wood, by an old bore, a Nabob, as they call him, and Touchwood by name."

" I have seen such a quiz about," said Lord Etherington—" What of him ?"

" Nothing," answered Jekyl ; " excepting that he seemed to know much more of your affairs than you should wish or are aware of. He smoked the truth of the rencontre betwixt Tyrrel and you, and what is worse—I must needs confess the truth—he contrived to wring out of me a sort of confirmation of his suspicions."

" 'Sdife ! wert thou mad ?" said Lord Etherington, turning pale ; " His is the very tongue to send the story through the whole country—Hal, you have undone me."

"I hope not," said Jekyl; "I trust in Heaven I have not!—His knowledge is quite general—only that there was some scuffle between you—Do not look so dismayed about it, or I will e'en go back and cut his throat, to secure his secrecy."

"Cursed indiscretion!" answered the Earl—"how could you let him fix on you at all?"

"I cannot tell," said Jekyl—"he has powers of boring beyond ten of the dullest of all possible doctors—stuck like a lampit to a rock—a perfect double of the Old Man of the Sea, who I take to have been the greatest bore on record."

"Could you not have turned him on his back like a turtle, and left him there?" said Lord Etherington.

"And had an ounce of lead in my body for my pains? No—no—we have already had footpad work enough—I promise you the old buck was armed, as if he meant to bing folks on the low toby."

"Well—well—But Martigny, or Tyrrel, as you call him—what says he?"

" Why Tyrrel, or Martigny as your lordship calls him," answered Jekyl, " will by no means listen to your lordship's proposition. He will not consent that Miss Mowbray's happiness shall be placed in your lordship's keeping; nay, it did not meet his approbation a bit the more, when I hinted at the acknowledgment of the marriage, or the repetition of the ceremony, attended by an immediate separation, which I thought I might venture to propose."

" And on what grounds does he refuse so reasonable an accommodation?" said Lord Etherington—" Does he still seek to marry the girl himself?"

" I believe he thinks the circumstances of the case render that impossible," replied his confidant.

" What? then he would play the dog in the manger—neither eat nor let eat?--He shall find himself mistaken. She has used me like a dog, Jekyl, since I saw you; and, by Jove! I will have her, that I may break her pride, and cut him to the liver with the agony of seeing it."

" Nay, but hold—hold!" said Jekyl; " per-

haps I have something to say on his part, that may be a better compromise than all you could have by teazing him. He is willing to purchase what he calls Miss Mowbray's tranquillity, at the expense of his resignation of his claims to your father's honours and estate; and he surprised me very much, my lord, by shewing me this list of documents, which, I am afraid, makes his success more than probable, if there really are such proofs in existence." Lord Etherington took the paper, and seemed to read with much attention, while Jekyl proceeded,—" He has written to procure these evidences from the person with whom they are deposited."

" We shall see what like they are when they arrive," said Lord Etherington; " they come by post, I suppose?"

" Yes; and may be immediately expected," said Jekyl.

" Well—he is my brother on one side of the house, at least," said Lord Etherington; " and I should not much like to have him lagged for forgery, which I suppose will be the end of his bolstering up an unsubstantial plea by fabricated

documents—I should like to see these papers he talks of."

"But, my lord," replied Jekyl, "Tyrrel's allegation is, that you *have* seen them; and that copies, at least, were made out for you, and are in your possession—such is his averment."

"He lies," answered Lord Etherington, "so far as he pretends I know of such papers. I consider the whole story as froth—foam—fudge, or whatever is most unsubstantial. It will prove such when the papers appear, if indeed they ever shall appear. The whole is a bully from beginning to end; and I wonder at thee, Jekyl, for being so thirsty after syllabub, that you can swallow such whip'd cream as that stuff amounts to.—No, no—I know my advantage, and shall use it so as to make all their hearts bleed. As for these papers, I recollect now that my agent talked of copies of some manuscripts having been sent him, but the originals were not then forthcoming; and I'll bet the long odds that they never are—mere fabrications—If I thought otherwise, would I not tell you?"

"Certainly, I hope you would, my lord," said

Jekyl; "for I see no chance of my being useful to you, unless I have the honour to enjoy your confidence."

"You do—you do, my friend," said Etherington, shaking him by the hand; "and, since I must consider your present negotiation as failed, I must devise some other mode of settling with this mad and troublesome fellow."

"No violence, my lord," said Jekyl, once more, and with much emphasis.

"None—none—none, by heaven!—Why, thou suspicious wretch, must I swear, to quell your scruples?—On the contrary, it shall not be my fault, if we are not on decent terms."

"It would be infinitely to the advantage of both your characters if you could bring that to pass," answered Jekyl; "and if you are serious in wishing it, I will endeavour to prepare Tyrrel. He comes to the Well or to the ordinary to-day, and it would be highly ridiculous to make a scene."

"True, true; find him out, my dear Jekyl, and persuade him how foolish it will be to bring our family quarrels out before strangers, and for

their amusement. They shall see the two bears can meet without biting.—Go—go—I will follow you instantly—go, and remember you have my full and exclusive confidence.—Go, half-bred, startling fool!" he continued, the instant Jekyl had left the room, " with just spirits enough to ensure your own ruin, by hurrying you into what you are not up to. But he has character in the world—is brave—and one of those whose countenance gives a fair face to a doubtful business. He is my creature, too—I have bought and paid for him, and it would be idle extravagance not to make use of him—But as to confidence—no confidence, honest Hal, beyond that which cannot be avoided. If I wanted a confidant, here comes a better than thou by half—Solmes has no scruples—he will always give me money's worth of zeal and secrecy *for* money."

His lordship's valet at this moment entered the apartment, a grave, civil-looking man, past the middle age, with a sallow complexion, a dark, thoughtful eye, slow, and sparing of speech, and sedulously attentive to all the duties of his situation.

"Solmes," said Lord Etherington, and then stopped short.

"My lord—" There was a pause; and when Lord Etherington had again said, "Solmes!" and his valet had answered, "Your lordship," there was a second pause; until the Earl, as if recollecting himself, "Oh! I remember what I wished to say—it was about the course of post here. It is not very regular, I believe?"

"Regular enough, my lord, so far as concerns this place—the people in the Aulton do not get their letters in course."

"And why not, Solmes?" said his lordship.

"The old woman who keeps the little inn there, my lord, is on bad terms with the postmistress—the one will not send for the letters, and the other will not dispatch them to the village; so, betwixt them, they are sometimes lost, or mislaid, or returned to the general post-office."

"I wish that may not be the case of a packet which I expect in a few days—it should have been here already, or, perhaps, it may arrive in

the beginning of the week—it is from that formal ass, Trueman the quaker, who addresses me by my Christian and family name, Francis Tyrrel. He is like enough to mistake the inn, too, and I should be sorry it fell into Monsieur Martigny's hands—I suppose you know he is in that neighbourhood. Look after its safety, Solmes—quietly, you understand; because people might put odd constructions, as if I were wanting a letter which was not my own."

"I understand perfectly, my lord," said Solmes, without exhibiting the slightest change in his sallow countenance, though perfectly comprehending the nature of the service required.

"And here is a note will pay for postage," said the Earl, putting into his valet's hand a bank-bill of considerable value; "and you may keep the balance for occasional expenses."

This was also fully understood; and Solmes, too politic and cautious even to look intelligence, or acknowledge gratitude, made only a bow of acquiescence, put the note into his pocket-book,

and assured his lordship that his commands should be punctually attended to.

"There goes the agent for my money, and for my purpose," said Lord Etherington, exultingly; "no extorting of confidence, no demanding of explanations, no tearing off the veil with which a delicate manœuvre is *gazé*—all excuses are received as *argent comptant*, providing only, that the best excuse of all, the *argent comptant* itself, come to recommend them.—Yet I will trust no one—I will out, like a skilful general, and reconnoitre in person."

With this resolution, Lord Etherington put on his surtout and cap, and sallying from his apartments, took the way to the bookseller's shop, which also served as post-office and circulating library; and being in the very centre of the parade, (for so is termed the broad terrace walk which leads from the inn to the Well,) it formed a convenient lounging-place for newsmongers and idlers of every description.

The Earl's appearance created, as usual, a sensation upon the public promenade; but, whe-

ther it was the suggestion of his own alarmed conscience, or that there was some real cause for the remark, he could not help thinking his reception was of a more doubtful character than usual. His fine figure and easy manners produced their usual effect, and all whom he spoke to received his attention as an honour; but none offered, as usual, to unite themselves to him, or to induce him to join their party. He seemed to be looked on rather as an object of observation and attention, than as making one of the company; and to escape from a distant gaze, which became rather embarrassing, he turned into the little emporium of news and literature.

He entered unobserved, just as Lady Penelope had finished reading some verses, and was commenting upon them with all the alacrity of a *femme scavante*, in possession of something which no one is to hear repeated oftener than once.

" Copy—no, indeed!" these were the snatches which reached Lord Etherington's ear, from the group of which her ladyship formed the centre—" honour bright—I must not betray poor Chat-

terley—besides, his lordship is my friend, and a person of rank, you know—so one would not—You have not got the book, Mr Pott?—you have not got Statius?—you never have anything one longs to see."

"Very sorry, my lady—quite out of copies at present—I expect some in my next monthly parcel."

"Good lack, Mr Pott, that is your never-failing answer," said Lady Penelope; "I believe if I were to ask you for the last new edition of the Alcoran, you would tell me it was coming down in your next monthly parcel."

"Can't say, my lady, really," answered Mr Pott; "have not seen the work advertised yet; but I have no doubt, if it is likely to take, there will be copies in my next monthly parcel."

"Mr Pott's supplies are always in the *paullo post futurum* tense," said Mr Chatterley, who was just entering the shop.

"Ah! Mr Chatterley, are you there?" said Lady Penelope; "I lay my death at your door—I cannot find this Thebaid, where Polynices and his brother——"

"Hush, my lady!—hush, for Heaven's sake!" said the poetical divine, and looked towards Lord Etherington. Lady Penelope took the hint, and was silent; but she had said enough to call up the traveller Touchwood, who raised his head from the newspaper which he was studying, and, without addressing his discourse to any one in particular, ejaculated, as if in scorn of Lady Penelope's geography—

"Polynices?—Polly Peachum.—There is no such place in the Thebais—the Thebais is in Egypt—the mummies come from the Thebais—I have been in the catacombs—caves very curious indeed—we were lapidated by the natives—pebbled to some purpose, I give you my word. My janizary threshed a whole village by way of retaliation."

While he was thus proceeding, Lord Etherington, as if in a listless mood, was looking at the letters which stood ranged on the chimney-piece, and carrying on a languid dialogue with Mrs Pott, whose person and manners were not ill adapted to her situation, for she was good-looking, and vastly fine and affected.

"Number of letters here which don't seem to find owners, Mrs Pott?"

"Great number, indeed, my lord—it is a great vexation, for we are obliged to return them to the post-office, and the postage is charged against us if they are lost; and how can one keep sight of them all?"

"Any love-letters among them, Mrs Pott?" said his lordship, lowering his tone.

"Oh, fie! my lord, how should I know?" answered Mrs Pott, dropping her voice to the same cadence.

"Oh! every one can tell a love-letter—that has ever received one, that is—one knows them without opening—they are always folded hurriedly and sealed carefully—and the direction manifests a kind of tremulous agitation, that marks the state of the writer's nerves—that now," —pointing with his switch to a letter upon the chimney-piece, "that *must* be a love-letter."

"He, he, he!" giggled Mrs Pott. "I beg pardon for laughing, my lord—but—he, he, he! —that is a letter from one Bindloose, the banker

body, to the old woman Luckie Dods, as they call her, at the change-house in the Aulton."

"Depend upon it then, Mrs Pott, that your neighbour, Mrs Dods, has got a lover in Mr Bindloose—unless the banker has been shaking hands with the palsy. Why do you not forward her letter?—you are very cruel to keep it in durance here."

"Me forward!" answered Mrs Pott; "the cappernoity, old, girning ale-wife, may wait long enough or I forward it—She'll not loose the letters that come to her by the King's post, and she must go on troking wi' the old carrier, as if there was no post-house in the neighbourhood. But the solicitor will be about wi' her one of these days."

"Oh! you are too cruel—you really should send the love-letter; consider, the older she is, the poor soul has the less time to lose."

But this was a topic on which Mrs Pott understood no jesting. She was well aware of our matron's inveteracy against her and her establishment, and she resented it as a place-man resents the efforts of a radical. She answered

something sulkily, "That they that loosed letters should have letters; and neither Luckie Dods, nor any of her lodgers, should ever see the scrape of a pen from the St Ronan's office, that they did not call for and pay for."

It is probable that this declaration contained the essence of the information which Lord Etherington had designed to extract by his momentary flirtation with Mrs Pott, for when, retreating as it were from this sore subject, she asked him, in a pretty mincing tone, to try his skill in pointing out another love-letter, he only answered carelessly, "that in order to do that he must write her one;" and leaving his confidential station by her little throne, he lounged through the narrow shop, bowed slightly to Lady Penelope as he passed, and issued forth upon the parade, where he saw a spectacle which might well have appalled a man of less self-possession than himself.

Just as he left the shop, little Miss Digges entered almost breathless, with the emotion of impatience and of curiosity. "Oh la! my lady, what do you stay here for?—Mr Tyrrel has just

entered the other end of the parade this moment, and Lord Etherington is walking that way—they must meet each other.—O Lord! come, come away, and see them meet!—I wonder if they'll speak—I hope they wont fight—Oh la! do come, my lady!"

"I must go with you, I find," said Lady Penelope; "it is the strangest thing, my love, that curiosity of yours about other folks' matters—I wonder what your mamma will say to it."

"Oh! never mind mamma—nobody minds her—papa, nor nobody—Do come, dearest Lady Pen, or I will run away by myself.—Mr Chatterley, do make her come!"

"I must come, it seems," said Lady Penelope, "or I shall have a pretty account of you."

But, notwithstanding this rebuke, and forgetting, at the same time, that people of quality ought never to seem in a hurry, Lady Penelope, with such of her satellites as she could hastily collect around her, tripped along the parade with unusual haste, in sympathy, doubtless, with Miss Digges's curiosity, as her ladyship declared she had none of her own.

Our friend, the traveller, had also caught up Miss Digges's information; and, breaking off abruptly an account of the Great Pyramid which had been naturally introduced by the mention of the Thebais, and echoing the fair alarmist's words, "hope they wont fight," he rushed upon the parade, and bustled along as hard as his sturdy supporters could carry him. If the gravity of the traveller, and the delicacy of Lady Penelope, were surprised into unwonted haste from their eagerness to witness the meeting of Tyrrel and Lord Etherington, it may be well supposed that the decorum of the rest of the company was a slender restraint on their curiosity, and that they hurried to witness the expected scene, with the alacrity of gentlemen of the fancy hastening to a set-to.

In truth, though the meeting afforded little sport to those who expected dire conclusions, it was, nevertheless, sufficiently interesting to those spectators who are accustomed to read the language of suppressed passion, betraying itself at the moment when the parties are most desirous to conceal it.

Tyrrel had been followed by several loiterers so soon as he entered the public walk; and their number was now so much reinforced, that he saw himself with pain and displeasure the centre of a sort of crowd who watched his motions. Sir Bingo and Captain MacTurk were the first to bustle through it, and to address him with as much politeness as they could command.

"Servant, sir," mumbled Sir Bingo, extending the right hand of fellowship and reconciliation, ungloved. "Servant—sorry that anything should have happened between us—very sorry, on my word."

"No more need be said, sir," replied Tyrrel; "the whole is forgotten."

"Very handsome, indeed—quite the civil thing—hope to meet you often, sir."—And here the knight was silent.

Meanwhile, the more verbose Captain proceeded, "Och, py Cot, and it was an awfu' mistake, and I could draw the penknife across my finger for having written the word.—By my sowl, and I scratched it till I scratched a hole in the paper.—Och! that I should live to do an uncivil

thing by a gentleman that had got himself hit in an honourable affair! But you should have written, my dear; for how the devil could we guess that you were so well provided in quarrels, that you had to settle two in one day?"

"I was hurt in an unexpected—an accidental manner, Captain MacTurk. I did not write, because there was something in my circumstances at the moment which required secrecy; but I was resolved, the instant I recovered, to put myself to rights in your good opinion."

"Och! and you have done that," said the Captain, nodding sagaciously; "for Captain Jekyl, who is a fine child, has put us all up to your honourable conduct. They are pretty boys, these guardsmen, though they may play a little fine sometimes, and think more of themselves than peradventure they need for to do, in comparison with us of the line.—But he let us know all about it—and, though he said not a word of a certain fine lord, with his foot-pad, and his hurt, and what not, yet we all knew how to lay that and that together.—And if the law would not right you, and there were bad words between

you, why should not two gentlemen right themselves? And as to your being kinsmen, why should not kinsmen behave to each other like men of honour? Only, some say you are father's sons, and that *is* something too near.—I had once thoughts of calling out my uncle Dougal myself, for there is no saying where the line should be drawn; but I thought, on the whole, there should be no fighting, as there is no marriage, within the forbidden degrees. As for first cousins—Whengh!—that's all fair—fire away, Flanigan.—But here is my lord, just upon us like a stag of the first head, and the whole herd behind him."

Tyrrel stepped forward a little before his officious companions, his complexion rapidly changing into various shades, like that of one who forces himself to approach and touch some animal or reptile for which he entertains that deep disgust and abhorrence which was anciently ascribed to constitutional antipathy. This appearance of constraint put upon himself, with the changes which it produced on his countenance, was calculated to prejudice him somewhat in

the opinion of the spectators, when compared with the steady, stately, yet, at the same time, easy demeanour of the Earl of Etherington, who was equal to any man in England in the difficult art of putting a good countenance on a bad cause. He met Tyrrel with an air as unembarrassed, as it was cold; and, while he paid the courtesy of a formal and distant salutation, he said aloud, " I presume, Mr Tyrrel de Martigny, that, since you have not thought fit to avoid this awkward meeting, you are disposed to remember our family connection so far as to avoid making sport for the good company."

" You have nothing to apprehend from my passion, Mr Bulmer," replied Tyrrel, " if you can assure yourself against the consequences of your own."

" I am glad of that," said the Earl, with the same composure, but sinking his voice so as only to be heard by Tyrrel; " and as we may not again in a hurry hold any communication together, I take the freedom to remind you, that I sent you a proposal of accommodation by my friend, Mr Jekyl."

" It was inadmissible," said Tyrrel—" altogether inadmissible—both from reasons which you may guess, and others which it is needless to detail.—I sent you a proposition, think of it well."

" I will," replied Lord Etherington, " when I shall see it supported by those alleged proofs, which I do not believe ever had existence."

" Your conscience holds another language from your tongue," said Tyrrel; " but I disclaim reproaches, and decline altercation. I will let Captain Jekyl know when I have received the papers, which, you say, are essential to your forming an opinion on my proposal.—In the meanwhile, do not think to deceive me. I am here for the very purpose of watching and defeating your machinations; and, while I live, be assured they shall never succeed.—And now, sir —or my lord—for the titles are in your choice—fare you well."

" Hold a little," said Lord Etherington. " Since we are condemned to shock each other's eyes, it is fit the good company should know what they are to think of us.—You are a philosopher, and do not value the opinion of the public—a poor

worldling like me is desirous to stand fair with it.—Gentlemen," he continued, raising his voice, "Mr Winterblossom, Captain MacTurk, Mr—what is his name, Jekyl?—Ay, Micklehen—You have, I believe, all some notion, that this gentleman, my near relation, and I, have some undecided claims on each other, which prevent our living upon good terms.—We do not mean, however, to disturb you with our family quarrels; and, for my own part, while this gentleman, Mr Tyrrel, or whatever he may please to call himself, remains a member of this company, my behaviour to him will be the same as to any stranger who may have that advantage.—Good morrow to you, sir—Good morning, gentlemen—we all meet at dinner, as usual.—Come, Jekyl."

So saying, he took Jekyl by the arm, and, gently extricating himself from the sort of crowd, walked off, leaving most of the company prepossessed in his favour, by the ease and apparent reasonableness of his demeanour. Sounds of depreciation, forming themselves indistinctly into something like the words, "my eye, and Betty

Martin," did indeed issue from the neckcloth of Sir Bingo, but they were not much attended to; for it had not escaped the observation of quick-sighted gentry at the Well, that the Baronet's feelings towards the noble Earl were in the inverse ratio of those displayed by Lady Binks, and that, though ashamed to testify, or perhaps incapable of feeling, any anxious degree of jealousy, his temper had been for some time considerably upon the fret; a circumstance concerning which his fair moiety did not think it necessary to give herself any concern.

Meanwhile the Earl of Etherington walked onward with his confidant, in the full triumph of successful genius.

"You see," he said, "Jekyl, that I can turn a corner with any man in England. It was a proper blunder of yours, that you must extricate the fellow from the mist which accident had flung round him—you might as well have published the story of our rencontre at once, for every one can guess it, by laying time, place, and circumstance together; but never trouble your

brains for a justification. You marked how I assumed my natural superiority over him—towered up in the full pride of legitimacy—silenced him, even where the good company most do congregate. This will go to Mowbray through his agent, and will put him still madder on my alliance. I know he looks jealously on my flirtation with a certain lady—the dasher yonder—nothing makes a man sensible of the value of an opportunity, but the chance of losing it."

"I wish to Heaven you would give up thoughts of Miss Mowbray!' said Jekyl; "and take Tyrrel's offer, if he has the means of making it good."

"Ay, if—if. But I am quite sure he has no such rights as he pretends to, and that his papers are all a deception.—Why do you put your eye upon me as fixed as if you were searching out some wonderful secret?"

"I wish I knew what to think of your real *bona fide* belief respecting these documents," said Jekyl, not a little puzzled by the steady and unembarrassed air of his friend.

"Why, thou most suspicious of coxcombs,"

said Etherington; "what the devil would you have me to say to you?—Can I, as the lawyers say, prove a negative? or, is it not very possible, that such things may exist, though I have never seen or heard of them? All I can say is, that of all men I am the most interested to deny the existence of such documents; and, therefore, certainly will not admit of it, unless I am compelled to do so by their being produced; nor then either, unless I am at the same time well assured of their authenticity."

"I cannot blame you for your being hard of faith, my lord," said Jekyl; "but still I think if you can cut out with your earldom, and your noble hereditary estate, I would in your case pitch Nettlewood to the devil."

"Yes, as you pitched your own patrimony, Jekyl; but you took care to have the spending of it first.—What would *you* give for such an opportunity of piecing your fortunes by marriage?—Confess the truth."

"I might be tempted, perhaps," said Jekyl, "in my present circumstances; but if they were what they have been, I should despise an estate

that was to be held by petticoat tenure, especially when the lady of the manor was a sickly fantastic girl, that hated me, as this Miss Mowbray has the bad taste to hate you.'

"Umph—sickly?—no, no, she is not sickly—she is as healthy as any one in constitution—and, on my word, I think her paleness only renders her more interesting. The last time I saw her, I thought she might have rivalled one of Canova's finest statues."

"Yes; but she is indifferent to you—you do not love her," said Jekyl.

"She is anything but indifferent to me," said the Earl; "she becomes daily more interesting—for her dislike piques me; and besides, she has the insolence openly to defy and contemn me before her brother, and in the eyes of all the world. I have a kind of loving hatred—a sort of hating love for her; in short, thinking upon her is like trying to read a riddle, and makes one make quite as many blunders, and talk just as much nonsense. If ever I have the opportunity, I will make her pay for all her airs."

"What airs?" said Jekyl.

"Nay, the devil may describe them, for I cannot; but, for example—Since her brother has insisted on her receiving me, or I should rather say on her appearing when I visit Shaws-Castle one would think her invention has toiled in discovering different ways of shewing want of respect to me, and dislike to my presence. Instead of dressing herself as a lady should, especially on such occasions, she chooses some fantastic or old fashioned, or negligent bedizening, which makes her at least look odd, if it cannot make her ridiculous—such triple tiaras of various-coloured gauze on her head—such pieces of old tapestry, I think, instead of shawls and pelisses—such thick-soled shoes—such tan-leather gloves—mercy upon us, Hal, the very sight of her equipment would drive mad a whole conclave of milliners! Then her postures are so strange—she does so stoop and lollop, as the women call it, so cross her legs and square her arms—were the goddess of grace to look down on her, it would put her to flight for ever!"

"And you are willing to make this awkward, ill-dressed, unmannered dowdy, your Countess,

Etherington; you, for whose critical eye half the town dress themselves," said Jekyl.

"It is all a trick, Hal—all an assumed character to get rid of me, to disgust me, to baffle me; but I am not to be had so easily. The brother is driven to despair—he bites his nails, winks, coughs, makes signs, which she always takes up at cross-purpose.—I hope he beats her after I go away; there would be a touch of consolation, were one but certain of that."

"A very charitable hope, truly, and might lead the lady to judge what she may expect after wedlock. But," added Jekyl, "cannot you, so skilful in fathoming every mood of the female mind, divine some mode of engaging her in conversation?"

"Conversation!" replied the Earl; "why, ever since the shock of my first appearance was surmounted, she has contrived to vote me a nonentity; and that she may annihilate me completely, she has chosen, of all occupations, that of working a stocking! From what cursed old antediluvian, who lived before the invention of

spinning-jennies, she learned this craft, Heaven only knows; but there she sits, with her work pinned to her knee—not the pretty taper silken fabric, with which Jeannette of Amiens coquetted, while Tristram Shandy was observing her progress; but a huge worsted bag, designed for some flat-footed old pauper, with heels like an elephant—But there she sits, counting all the stitches as she works, and refusing to speak, or listen, or look up, under pretence that it disturbs her calculation!"

"An elegant occupation, truly, and I wonder it does not work a cure upon her noble admirer," said Jekyl.

"Confound her—no—she shall not trick me. And then amid this affectation of vulgar stolidity, there break out such sparkles of exultation, when she thinks she has succeeded in baffling her brother, and in plaguing me, that, by my faith, Hal, I could not tell, were it at my option, whether to kiss or to cuff her."

"You are determined to go on with this strange affair, then," said Jekyl.

"On—on—on, my boy!—Clara and Nettle-

wood for ever," answered the Earl. "Besides, this brother of hers provokes me too—he does not do for me half what he might—what he ought to do. He stands on points of honour, forsooth, this broken-down horse-jockey, who swallowed my two thousand pounds as a pointer would a pat of butter.—I can see he wishes to play fast and loose—has some suspicions, like you, Hal, upon the strength of my right to my father's titles and estate, as if with the tythe of the Nettlewood property alone, I would not be too good a match for one of his beggarly family. He must scheme, forsooth, this half-baked Scotch cake—He must hold off and on, and be cautious, and wait the result, and try conclusions with me, this lump of oatmeal dough.—I am much tempted to make an example of him in the course of my proceedings."

"Why, this is vengeance horrible and dire," said Jekyl; "yet I give up the brother to you; he is a conceited coxcomb, and deserves a lesson. But I would fain intercede for the sister."

"We shall see," replied the Earl; and then suddenly, "I tell you what it is, Hal; her ca-

prices are so diverting, that I sometimes think out of mere contradiction, I almost love her; at least, if she would but clear old scores, and forget one unlucky prank of mine, it should be her own fault if I made her not a happy woman."

CHAPTER VI

A DEATH-BED

It comes— it wrings me in my parting hour,
The long-hid crime—the well-disguised guilt
Bring me some holy priest to lay the spectre
Old Play

The general expectation of the company had been disappointed by the pacific termination of the meeting betwixt the Earl of Etherington and Tyrrel, the anticipation of which had created so deep a sensation. It had been expected that some appalling scene would have taken place; instead of which, each party seemed to acquiesce in a sullen neutrality, and leave the war to be carried on by their lawyers. It was generally understood that the cause was removed out of the courts of Bellona into that of Themis; and although the litigants continued to inhabit

the same neighbourhood, and once or twice met at the public walks or public table, they took no notice of each other, farther than by exchanging on such occasions a grave and distant bow.

In the course of two or three days, people ceased to take interest in a feud so coldly conducted; and if they thought of it at all, it was but to wonder that both the parties should persevere in residing near the Spaw, and in chilling, with their unsocial behaviour, a party met together for the purposes of health and amusement

But the brothers, as the reader is aware, however painful their occasional meetings might be, had the strongest reasons to remain in each other's neighbourhood—Lord Etherington to conduct his design upon Miss Mowbray, Tyrrel to disconcert his plan, if possible, and both to await the answer which should be returned by the house in London, who were depositaries of the papers left by the late Earl.

Jekyl, anxious to assist his friend as much as possible, made in the meantime a visit to old Touchwood at the Aulton, expecting to find him

as communicative as he had formerly been on the subject of the quarrel betwixt the brothers, and trusting to discover, by dint of address, whence he had derived his information concerning the affairs of the noble house of Etherington. But the confidence which he had been induced to expect on the part of the old traveller was not reposed. Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, as the Earl called him, had changed his mind, or was not in the vein of communication. The only proof of his confidence worth mentioning, was his imparting to the young officer a valuable receipt for concocting curry-powder.

Jekyl was therefore reduced to believe that Touchwood, who appeared all his life to have been a great intermeddler in other peoples' affairs, had puzzled out the information which he appeared to possess of Lord Etherington's affairs, through some of those obscure sources whence very important secrets do frequently, to the astonishment and confusion of those whom they concern, escape to the public. He thought this the more likely, as Touchwood was by no

means critically nice in his society, but was observed to converse as readily with a gentleman's gentleman, as with the gentleman to whom he belonged, and with a lady's attendant, as with the lady herself. He that will stoop to this sort of society, who is fond of tattle, being at the same time disposed to pay some consideration for gratification of his curiosity, and not over scrupulous respecting its accuracy, may always command a great quantity of private anecdote. Captain Jekyl naturally enough concluded, that this busy old man became in some degree master of other people's affairs by such correspondences as these; and he could himself bear witness to his success in cross-examination, as he had been surprised into avowal of the rencontre between the brothers, by an insidious observation of the said Touchwood. He reported, therefore, to the Earl, after this interview, that, on the whole, he thought he had no reason to fear much on the subject of the traveller, who, though he had become acquainted, by one means or other, with some leading facts of his remarkable history, only possess-

ed them in a broken, confused, and desultory manner, insomuch, that he seemed to doubt whether the parties in the expected law-suit were brothers or cousins, and appeared totally ignorant of the facts on which it was to be founded.

It was the next day after this eeclaircissement on the subject of Touchwood, that Lord Etherington dropped as usual into the bookseller's shop, got his papers, and skimming his eye over the shelf on which lay, till called for, the postponed letters destined for the Aulton, saw with a beating heart the smart post-mistress toss amongst them, with an air of sovereign contempt, a pretty large packet, addressed to Francis Tyrrel, Esq., &c. He withdrew his eyes, as if conscious that even to have looked on this important parcel might engender some suspicion of his purpose, or intimate the deep interest which he took in the contents of the missive which was so slightly treated by his friend Mrs Pott. At this moment the door of the shop opened, and Lady Penelope Penfeather entered, with her eternal *pendante*, the little Miss Digges.

"Have you seen Mr Mowbray?—Has Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's been down this morning?—Do you know anything of Mr Mowbray, Mrs Pott?" were questions which the lettered lady eagerly huddled on the back of each other, scarcely giving time to the lady of letters to return a decided negative to all and each of them.

"Mr Mowbray was not about—was not coming there this morning—his servant had just called for letters and papers, and announced as much."

"Good Heaven! how unfortunate," said Lady Penelope, with a deep sigh, and sinking down on one of the little sofas in an attitude of shocked desolation, which called the instant attention of Mr Pott and his good woman, the first uncorking a small phial of salts, for he was a pharmacopolist as well as vender of literature and transmitter of letters, and the other hastening for a glass of water. A strong temptation thrilled from Lord Etherington's eyes to his finger-ends.—Two steps might have brought him within arm's length of the unwatched packet, on the contents of which, in all probability, rested the hope and

claims of his rival in honour and fortune; and in the general confusion, was it impossible to possess himself of it unobserved? But no—no—no—the attempt was too dreadfully dangerous to be risked; and, passing from one extreme to another, he felt as if he was incurring suspicion by suffering Lady Penelope to play off her airs of affected distress and anxiety, without seeming to take that interest in them which her rank at least might be supposed to demand. Stung with this apprehension, he hastened to express himself so anxiously on the subject, and to demonstrate so busily his wish to assist her ladyship, that he presently stood committed a great deal farther than he had intended.—Lady Penelope was infinitely obliged to his lordship—indeed, it was her character in general not to permit herself to be overcome by circumstances; but something had happened, so strange, so embarrassing, so melancholy, that she owned it had quite overcome her—notwithstanding, she had at all times piqued herself on supporting her own distresses, better than she was able to suppress her emotions in viewing those of others.

"Could he be of any use?" Lord Etherington asked. "She had inquired after Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's—his servant was at her ladyship's command, if she chose to send to command his attendance."

"Oh! no, no!" said Lady Penelope; "I dare say, my dear lord, you will answer the purpose a great deal better than Mr Mowbray—that is, providing you are a Justice of Peace."

"A Justice of Peace!" said Lord Etherington, much surprised; "I am in the commission unquestionably, but not for any Scotch county."

"O, that does not signify," said Lady Penelope; "and if you will trust yourself with me a little way, I will explain to you how you can do one of the most charitable, and kind, and generous things in the world."

Lord Etherington's delight in the exercise of charity, kindness, and generosity, was not so exuberant as to prevent his devising some means for evading Lady Penelope's request, when, looking through the sash-door, he had a distant

glance of his servant Solmes approaching the post-office.

I have heard of a sheep-stealer who had rendered his dog so skilful an accomplice in his nefarious traffic, that he used to send him out to commit acts of felony by himself, and had even contrived to impress on the poor cur the caution that he should not, on such occasions, even seem to recognize his master, if they met accidentally. Apparently, Lord Etherington conducted himself upon a similar principle; for he had no sooner a glimpse of his agent, than he seemed to feel the necessity of leaving the stage free for his machinations.

"My servant," he said, with as much indifference as he could assume, "will call for my letters—I must attend Lady Penelope;" and, instantly proffering his services as Justice of the Peace, or in whatever other quality she chose to employ them, he hastily presented his arm, and scarce gave her ladyship time to recover from her state of languor to the necessary degree of activity, ere he hurried her from the shop; and, with

her thin hatchet-face chattering close to his ear, her yellow and scarlet feathers crossing his nose, her lean right honourable arm hooking his elbow, he braved the suppressed titters and sneers of all the younger women whom he met as they traversed the parade.—One glance of intelligence, though shot at a distance, passed betwixt his lordship and Solmes; as the former left the public walk under the guidance of Lady Penelope, his limbs indeed obeying her pleasure, and ears dinned with her attempts to explain the business in question, but his mind totally indifferent where he was going, or ignorant upon what purpose, and exclusively occupied with the packet in Mrs Pott's heap of postponed letters, and its probable fate.

At length, an effort of recollection made Lord Etherington sensible that his abstraction must seem strange, and, as his conscience told him, even suspicious, in the eyes of his companion; putting therefore the necessary degree of constraint upon himself, he expressed, for the first time, curiosity to know where their walk was to terminate. It chanced, as it happened, that this was precisely the question which he needed not

have asked, if he had paid the slightest attention to the voluble communications of her ladyship, which had all turned upon this subject.

"Now, my dear lord," she said, "I must believe you lords of the creation think us poor simple women the vainest fools alive. I have told you how much pain it costs me to speak about my little charities, and yet you come to make me tell you the whole story over again. But I hope, after all, your lordship is not surprised at what I have thought it my duty to do in this sad affair—perhaps I have listened too much to the dictates of my own heart, which are apt to be so deceitful."

On the watch to get at something explanatory, yet afraid, by demanding it directly, to shew that the previous tide of narrative and pathos had been lost on an inattentive ear, Lord Etherington could only say, that Lady Penelope could not err in acting according to the dictates of her own judgment.

Still the compliment had not spice enough for the lady's sated palate; so, like a true glutton of

praise, she began to help herself with the soup-ladle.

"Ah! judgment?—how is it you men know us so little, that you think we can pause to weigh sentiment in the balance of judgment?—that is expecting rather too much from us poor victims of our feelings. So that you must really hold me excused if I forgot the errors of this guilty and unhappy creature, when I looked upon her wretchedness—Not that I would have my little friend, Miss Digges, or your lordship, suppose that I am capable of palliating the fault, while I pity the poor, miserable sinner. Oh, no—Walpole's verses express beautifully what one ought to feel on such occasions—

'For never was the gentle breast
Insensible to human woes;
Feeling, though firm, it melts distress'd
For weaknesses it never knows.'"

"Most accursed of all *precieuses*," thought his lordship, "when wilt thou, amidst all thy chatter, utter one word sounding like sense or information!"

But Lady Penelope went on—"If you knew, my lord, how I lament my limited means on those occasions! but I have gathered something among the good people at the Well. I asked that selfish wretch Winterblossom to walk down with me to view her distress, and the heartless beast told me he was afraid of infection!—infection from a puer—puerperal fever! I should not perhaps pronounce the word, but science is of no sex—however, I have always used thieves vinegar essence, and never have gone farther than the threshold."

Whatever were Etherington's faults, he did not want charity, so far as it consists in giving alms.

"I am sorry," he said, taking out his purse, "your ladyship should not have applied to me."

"Pardon me, my lord, we only beg from our friends; and your lordship is so constantly engaged with Lady Binks, that we have rarely the pleasure of seeing you in what I call *my* little circle."

Lord Etherington, without farther answer,

again tendered a couple of guineas, and observed, that the poor woman should have medical attendance.

"Why so I say," answered Lady Penelope; "and I asked the brute Quackleben, who, I am sure, owes me some gratitude, to go and see her; but the sordid monster answered, 'Who was to pay him?'—He grows every day more intolerable, now that he seems sure of marrying that fat blowsy widow. He could not, I am sure, expect that I—out of my pittance—And besides, my lord, is there not a law that the parish, or the county, or the something or other, shall pay for physicking the poor?"

"We will find means to secure the Doctor's attendance," said Lord Etherington; "and I believe my best way will be to walk back to the Well, and send him to wait on the patient. I am afraid I can be of little use to a poor woman in a child-bed fever."

"Puerperal, my lord, puerperal," said Lady Penelope, in a tone of correction.

"In a puerperal fever, then," said Lord Etherington; "why, what can I do to help her?"

"Oh! my lord, you have forgotten that this Anne Heggie, that I told you of, came here with one child in her arms—and another—in short, about to become a mother again—and settled herself in this miserable hut I told you of—and some people think the minister should have sent her to her own parish, but he is a strange, soft-headed, sleepy sort of man, not over active in his parochial duties. However, there she settled, and there was something about her quite beyond the style of a common pauper, my lord —not at all the disgusting sort of person that you give a sixpence to while you look another way—but some one that seemed to have seen better days—one that, as Shakespeare says, could a tale unfold—though, indeed, I have never thoroughly learned her history—only, that to-day, as I called to know how she was, and sent my maid into her hut with some trifle, not worth mentioning, I find there is something hangs about her mind concerning the Mowbray family here of St Ronan's—and my woman says the poor creature is dying, and is raving either for Mr Mowbray or for some magistrate to receive a declaration; and

so I have given you the trouble to come with me, that we may get out of the poor creature, if possible, whatever she has got to say.—I hope it is not murder—I hope it is not—though young St Ronan's has been a strange, wild, daring, thoughtless creature—*sgherro insigne*, as the Italian says.—But here is the hut, my lord—pray, walk in."

The mention of the St Ronan's family, and of a secret relating to them, banished the thoughts which Lord Etherington began to entertain of leaving Lady Penelope to execute her works of devoted charity without his assistance. It was now with an interest equal to her own, that he stood before a most miserable hut, where the unfortunate woman, her distresses not greatly relieved by Lady Penelope's ostentatious bounty, had resided both previous to her confinement, and since that event had taken place, with an old woman, one of the parish poor, whose miserable dole the minister had augmented, that she might have some means of assisting the stranger.

Lady Penelope lifted the latch and entered, after a momentary hesitation, which proceeded

from a struggle betwixt her fear of infection, and her eager curiosity to know something, she could not guess what, that might affect the Mowbrays in their honour or fortunes. The latter soon prevailed, and she entered, followed by Lord Etherington. The lady, like other comforters of the cabins of the poor, proceeded to rebuke the grumbling old woman, for want of order and cleanliness—censured the food which was provided for the patient, and inquired particularly after the wine which she had left to make caudle with. The crone was not so dazzled with Lady Penelope's dignity or bounty as to endure her reprimand with patience. "They that had their bread to won wi' ae arm," she said, for the other hung powerless by her side, "had mair to do than to soop houses; if her leddyship wad let her ain idle quean of a maid take the besom, she might make the house as clean as she liked; and madam wad be a' the better of the exercise, and wad hae done, at least, ae turn of wark at the week's end."

"Do you hear the old hag, my lord?" said Lady Penelope. "Well, the poor are horrid

ungrateful wretches.—And the wine, dame—the wine?"

"The wine!—there was hardly half a mutchkin, and puir, thin, fusionless skink it was—the wine was drank out, ye may swear—we didna fling it ower our shouther—if ever we were to get good o't, it was by taking it naked, and no wi' your sugar and your slaisters—I wish, for ane, I had ne'er kend the sour smack o't. If the bedral hadna gien me a drap of usquebaugh, I might e'en hae died of your ladyship's liquor, for——"

Lord Etherington here interrupted the grumbling crone, thrusting some silver into her hand, and at the same time begging her to be silent. The hag weighed the crown-piece in her hand, and crawled to her chimney-corner, muttering as she went,—"This is something like—this is something like—no like rinning into the house and out of the house, and geeing orders, like mistress and mair, and than a puir shilling again Saturday at e'en."

So saying, she sat down to her wheel, and seized, at the same time, her jet-black cutty pipe,

from which she soon sent such clouds of vile mundungus vapour as must have cleared the premises of Lady Penelope, had she not been strong in purpose to share the expected confession of the invalid. As for Miss Digges, she coughed, sneezed, retched, and finally ran out of the cottage, declaring she could not live in such a smoke, if it were to hear twenty sick women's last speeches; and that, besides, she was sure to know all about it from Lady Penelope, if it was ever so little worth telling over again.

Lord Etherington was now standing beside the miserable flock-bed, in which lay the poor patient, distracted in what seemed to be her dying moments, with the peevish clamour of the elder infant, to which she could only reply by low moans, turning her looks as well as she could from its ceaseless whine, to the other side of her wretched couch, where lay the unlucky creature to which she had last given birth; its shivering limbs imperfectly covered with a blanket, its little features already swollen and bloated, and its eyes scarce open, apparently insensible to

the evils of a state from which it seemed about to be speedily released.

"You are very ill, poor woman," said Lord Etherington; "I am told you desire a magistrate."

"It was Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's whom I desired to see—John Mowbray of St Ronan's—the lady promised to bring him here."

"I am not Mowbray of St Ronan's," said Lord Etherington; "but I am a justice of peace, and a member of the legislature—I am, moreover, Mr Mowbray's particular friend, if I can be of use to you in any of these capacities."

The poor woman remained long silent, and when she spoke it was doubtfully.

"Is my Lady Penelope Penfeather there?" she said, straining her darkened eyes.

"Her ladyship is present, and within hearing," said Lord Etherington.

"My case is the worse," answered the dying woman, for so she seemed, "if I must communicate such a secret as mine to a man of whom I

know nothing, and a woman of whom I only know that she wants discretion."

"I—I want discretion!" said Lady Penelope; but at a signal from Lord Etherington she seemed to restrain herself; nor did the sick woman, whose powers of observation were greatly impaired, seem to be aware of the interruption. She spoke, notwithstanding her situation, with an intelligible and even emphatic voice; her manner in a great measure betraying the influence of the fever, and her tone and language seeming much superior to her most miserable condition.

"I am not the abject creature which I seem," she said; "at least, I was not born to be so. I wish I *were* that utter abject! I wish I were a wretched pauper of the lowest class—a starving vagabond—a wifeless mother—ignorance and insensibility would make me bear my lot like the outcast animal that dies patiently on the side of the common, where it has been half-starved during its life. But I—but I—born and bred to better things, have not lost the memory of them, and

they make my present condition—my shame—my poverty—my infamy—the sight of my dying babes—the sense that my own death is coming fast on—they make these things a foretaste of hell!"

Lady Penelope's self-conceit and affectation were broken down by this fearful exordium. She sobbed, shuddered, and, for once perhaps in her life, felt the real, not the assumed necessity of putting her handkerchief to her eyes. Lord Etherington also was moved.

"Good woman," he said, "as far as relieving your personal wants can mitigate your distress, I will see that is fully performed, and that your poor children are attended to."

"May God bless you!" said the poor woman, with a glance at the wretched forms beside her; "and may you," she added, after a momentary pause, "deserve the blessing of God, for it is bestowed in vain on those who are unworthy of it."

Lord Etherington felt, perhaps, a twinge of conscience, for he said, something hastily, "Pray

go on, good woman, if you really have anything to communicate to me as a magistrate—it is time your condition was somewhat mended, and I will cause you to be cared for directly."

"Stop yet a moment," she said; "let me unload my conscience before I go hence, for no earthly relief will long avail to prolong my time here. I was well-born, the more my present shame!—well educated, the greater my present guilt!—I was always, indeed, poor, but I felt not of the ills of poverty. I only thought of it when my vanity demanded idle and expensive gratification, for real wants I knew none. I was companion of a young lady of higher rank than my own, my relative however, and one of such exquisite kindness of disposition, that she treated me as a sister, and would have shared with me all that she had on earth——I scarce think I can go farther with my story!—something rises to my throat when I recollect how I rewarded her sisterly love!—I was elder than Clara—I should have directed her reading, and confirmed her understanding; but my own bent led me to pe-

ruse only works, which, though they burlesque nature, are seductive to the imagination. We read these follies together, until we had fashioned out for ourselves a little world of romance, and prepared ourselves for a maze of adventures. Clara's imaginations were as pure as those of angels; mine were—but it is unnecessary to tell them. The fiend, always watchful, presented a tempter at the moment when it was most dangerous."

She paused here, as if she found difficulty in expressing herself; and Lord Etherington, turning, with great appearance of interest, to Lady Penelope, began to inquire "Whether it were quite agreeable to her ladyship to remain any longer an ear-witness of this unfortunate's confession?—it seems to be verging on some things—things that it might be unpleasant for your ladyship to hear."

"I was just forming the same opinion, my lord; and, to say truth, was about to propose to your lordship to withdraw, and leave me alone with the poor woman. My sex will make her ne-

cessary communications more frank in your lordship's absence."

"True, madam; but then I am called here in my capacity of a magistrate."

"Hush!" said Lady Penelope; "she speaks."

"They say every woman that yields, makes herself a slave to her seducer; but I sold my liberty not to a man, but a demon! He made me serve him in his vile schemes against my friend and patroness—and oh! he found in me an agent too willing, from mere envy, to destroy the virtue which I had lost myself. Do not listen to me any more—Go, and leave me to my fate; I am the most detestable wretch that ever lived—detestable to myself worst of all, because even in my penitence there is a secret whisper that tells me, that were I as I have been, I would again act over all the wickedness I have done, and much worse. Oh! for Heaven's assistance, to crush the wicked thought!"

She closed her eyes, folded her emaciated hands, and held them upwards in the attitude of one who prays internally; presently the hands

separated, and fell gently down on the miserable couch; but her eyes did not open, nor was there the slightest sign of motion on the features. Lady Penelope shrieked faintly, hid her eyes, and hurried back from the bed, while Lord Etherington, his looks darkening with a complication of feelings, remained gazing on the poor woman, as if eager to discern whether the spark of life was totally extinct. Her grim old assistant hurried to the bedside, with some spirits in a broken glass.

"Have ye no had pennyworths for your charity?" she said, in spiteful scorn. "Ye buy the very life o' us wi' your shillings and sixpences, your groats and your bodles—ye hae gar'd the puir wretch speak till she swarfs, and now ye stand as if ye never saw a woman in a dwam before. Let me till her wi' the dram—mony words mickle drought, ye ken—Stand out o' my gate, my leddy, if sae be that ye are a leddy; there is little use of the like of you when there is death in the pot."

Lady Penelope, half affronted, but still more frightened by the manners of the old hag, now

gladly embraced Lord Etherington's renewed offer to escort her from the hut. He left it not, however, without bestowing an additional gratuity on the old woman, who received it with a whining benediction.

"The Almighty guide your course through the troubles of this wicked warld—and the muckle deevil blaw wind in your sails," she added, in her natural tone, as the guests vanished from her miserable threshold—"A wheen cork-headed, barmy-brained gowks! that wunna let puir folk sae muckle as die in quiet, wi' their sossings and their soopings."

"This poor creature's declaration," said Lord Etherington to Lady Penelope, "seems to refer to matters which the law has nothing to do with, and which, perhaps, as they seem to implicate the peace of a family of respectability, and the character of a young lady, we ought to inquire no further after."

"I differ from your lordship," said Lady Penelope; "I differ extremely—I suppose you guess whom her discourse touched upon?"

"Indeed, your ladyship does my acuteness too much honour."

"Did she not mention a Christian name?" said Lady Penelope; "your lordship is strangely dull this morning?"

"A Christian name?—No, none that I heard —yes, she said something about a Catherine, I think it was."

"Catherine! No, my lord, it was Clara—rather a rare name in this country, and belonging, I think, to a young lady of whom your lordship should know something, unless your evening flirtations with Lady Binks have blotted entirely out of your memory your morning visits to Shaws-Castle. You are a bold man, my lord. I would advise you to include Mrs Blower among the objects of your attention, and then you will have maid, wife, and widow upon your list."

"Upon my honour, your ladyship is too severe," said Lord Etherington; "you surround yourself every evening with all that is clever and accomplished among the people here, and then you ridicule a poor secluded monster, who dare not approach your charmed circle, because he

seeks for some amusement elsewhere. This is to tyrannize and not to reign—it is Turkish despotism!"

"Ah! my lord, I know you well, my lord—Sorry would your lordship be, had you not power to render yourself welcome to any circle which you may please to approach."

"That is to say, you will pardon me if I intrude on your ladyship's coterie this evening?"

"There is no society which Lord Etherington can think of frequenting, where he will not be a welcome guest."

"I will plead then at once my pardon and privilege this evening—And now (speaking as if he had succeeded in establishing some confidence with her ladyship,) what do you really think of this blind story?"

"O, I must believe it concerns Miss Mowbray. She was always an odd girl—something about her I could never endure—a sort of effrontery—that is, perhaps, a harsh word, but a kind of confidence—so that though I kept on a footing with her, because she was an orphan

girl of good family, and because I really knew nothing positively bad of her, yet she sometimes absolutely shocked me."

"Your ladyship, perhaps, would not think it right to give publicity to the story; at least, till you know exactly what it is," said the Earl, in a tone of suggestion.

"Depend upon it, that it is quite the worst, the very worst—You heard the woman say that she had exposed Clara to ruin—and you know she must have meant Clara Mowbray, because she was so anxious to tell the story to her brother, St Ronan's."

"Very true—I did not think of that," answered Lord Etherington; "still it would be hard on the poor girl if it should get abroad."

"Oh, it will never get abroad for me," said Lady Penelope; "I would not tell the very wind of it. But then I cannot meet Miss Mowbray as formerly—I have a station in life to maintain, my lord—and I am under the necessity of being select in my society—it is a duty I owe the public, if it were even not my own inclination."

"Certainly, my Lady Penelope," said Lord

Etherington; "but then consider, that, in a place where all eyes are necessarily observant of your ladyship's behaviour, the least coldness on your part to Miss Mowbray—and, after all, we have nothing like assurance of anything being wrong there—would ruin her with the company here, and with the world at large."

"Oh! my lord," answered Lady Penelope, "as for the truth of the story, I have some private reasons of my own for 'holding the strange tale devoutly true;' for I had a mysterious hint from a very worthy, but a very singular man, (your lordship knows how I adore originality,) the clergyman of the parish, who made me aware there was something wrong about Miss Clara—something that—your lordship will excuse my speaking more plainly—Oh, no!—I fear—I fear it is all too true—You know Mr Cargill, I suppose, my lord?"

"Yes—no—I—I think I have seen him," said Lord Etherington. "But how came the lady to make the parson her father-confessor?—they have no auricular confession in the Kirk—it must have been with the purpose of marriage,

I presume—let us hope that it took place—perhaps it really was so—did he, Cargill—the minister, I mean—say anything of such a matter?"

"Not a word—not a word—I see where you are, my lord, you would put a good face on't.—

They call'd it marriage, by that specious name
To veil the crime, and sanctify the shame.

Queen Dido for that. How the clergyman came into the secret, I cannot tell—he is a very close man.—But I know he will not hear of Miss Mowbray being married with any one, unquestionably because he knows that, in doing so, she would introduce disgrace into some honest family—and, truly, I am much of his mind, my lord."

"Perhaps Mr Cargill may know the lady is privately married already," said the Earl; "I think that is the more natural inference, begging your ladyship's pardon for presuming to differ in opinion."

Lady Penelope seemed determined not to take this view of the case.

"No, no—no, I tell you," she replied; "she cannot be married, for if she were married, how

could the poor wretch say that she was ruined? —You know there is a difference betwixt ruin and marriage."

"Some people are said to have found them synonymous, Lady Penelope," answered the Earl.

"You are smart on me, my lord; but still, in common parlance, when we say a woman is ruined, we mean quite the contrary of her being married—it is impossible for me to be more explicit upon such a topic, my lord."

"I defer to your ladyship's better judgment," said Lord Etherington. "I only entreat you to observe a little caution on this business—I will make the strictest inquiries at this woman, and acquaint you with the result; and I hope, out of regard to the respectable family of St Ronan's, your ladyship will be in no hurry to intimate anything to Miss Mowbray's prejudice."

"I certainly am no person to spread scandal, my lord," answered the lady, drawing herself up; "at the same time, I must say, the Mowbrays have little claim on me for forbearance. I am sure I was the first person to bring this Spaw

into fashion, which has been a matter of such consequence to their estate; and yet Mr Mowbray set himself against me, my lord, in every possible sort of way, and encouraged the underbred people about him to behave very strangely. —There was the business of building the Belvidere, which he would not permit to be done out of the stock-purse of the company, because I had given the workmen the plan and the orders—and then, about the tea-room—and the hour for beginning dancing—and about the subscription for Mr Rymour's new Tale of Chivalry—in short, I owe no consideration to Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's."

"But the poor young lady," said Lord Etherington.

"Oh! the poor young lady?—the poor young lady can be as saucy as a rich young lady, I promise you.—There was a business in which she used me scandalously, Lord Etherington—it was about a very trifling matter—a shawl. Nobody minds dress less than I do, my lord; I thank Heaven my thoughts turn upon very different topics—but it is in trifles that disrespect and unkindness

is shewn; and I have had a full share of both from Miss Clara, besides a good deal of impertinence from her brother upon the same subject."

"There is but one way remains," thought the Earl, as they approached the Spaw, "and that is, to work on the fears of this d—d vindictive blue-stocking'd wild-cat.—Your ladyship," he said aloud, "is aware what severe damages have been awarded in late cases where something approaching to scandal has been traced to ladies of consideration—the privileges of the tea-table have been found insufficient to protect some fair critics against the consequences of too liberal animadversion upon the characters of their friends. So, pray remember, that yet we know very little on this subject."

Lady Penelope loved money, and feared the law; and this hint, fortified by her acquaintance with Mowbray's love of his sister, and his irritable and revengeful disposition, brought her in a moment much nigher the temper in which Lord Etherington wished to leave her. She protested, that no one could be more tender than she of the fame of the unfortunate, even supposing their

guilt was fully proved—promised caution on the subject of the pauper's declaration, and hoped Lord Etherington would join her tea party early in the evening, as she wished to make him acquainted with one or two of her *proteges*, whom, she was sure, his lordship would find deserving of his advice and countenance. Being by this time at the door of her own apartment, her ladyship took leave of the Earl with a most gracious smile.

CHAPTER VII.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

On the Ice-beam lies the land, boys,
  See all clear to reef each course ;
Let the fore-sheet go, don't mind, boys,
  Though the weather should be worse.
The Storm.

"IT darkens round me like a tempest," thought Lord Etherington, as, with slow step, folded arms, and his white hat slouched over his brows, he traversed the short interval of space betwixt his own apartments and those of the Lady Penelope. In a buck of the old school, one of Congreve's men of wit and pleasure about town, this would have been a departure from character ; but the present fine man does not derogate from his quality, even by exhibiting all the moody and gentlemanlike solemnity of Master

Stephen. So, Lord Etherington was at liberty to carry on his reflections, without attracting observation.—" I have put a stopper into the mouth of that old vinegar cruet of quality, but the acidity of her temper will soon dissolve the charm—And what to do?"

As he looked round him, he saw his trusty valet Solmes, who, touching his hat with due respect, said, as he passed him, " Your lordship's letters are in your private dispatch-box."

Simple as these words were, and indifferent the tone in which they were spoken, their import made Lord Etherington's heart bound as if his fate had depended on the accents. He intimated no farther interest in the communication, however, than to desire Solmes to be below, in case he should ring; and with these words entered his apartment, and barred and bolted the door, even before he looked on the table where his dispatch-box was placed.

Lord Etherington had, as is usual, one key to the box which held his letters, his confidential servant being entrusted with the other; so that, under the protection of a patent lock, his dis-

patches escaped all risk of being tampered with,—a precaution not altogether unnecessary on the part of those who frequent hotels and lodging-houses.

"By your leave, Mr Bramah," said the Earl, as he applied the key, jesting, as it were, with his own agitation, as he would have done with that of a third party. The lid was raised, and displayed the packet, the appearance and superscription of which had attracted his observation but a short while since in the post-office. *Then* he would have given much to be possessed of the opportunity which was now in his power; but many pause on the brink of a crime, who have contemplated it at a distance without scruple.—Lord Etherington's first impulse had led him to poke the fire; and he held in his hand the letter which he was more than half tempted to commit, without even breaking the seal, to the fiery element. But, though sufficiently familiarized with guilt, he was not as yet acquainted with it in its basest shapes—he had not yet acted with meanness, or at least with what the world terms such. He had been a duellist, the man-

ners of the age authorized it—a libertine, the world excused it to his youth and condition—a bold and successful gambler, for that quality he was admired and envied; and a thousand other inaccuracies, to which these practices and habits lead, were easily slurred over in a man of quality, with fortune and spirit to support his rank. But his present meditated act was of a different kind. Tell it not in Bond Street, whisper it not on St James's pavement!—it amounted to an act of petty larceny, for which the code of honour would admit of no composition.

Lord Etherington, under the influence of these recollections, stood for a few minutes suspended—But the devil always finds logic to convince his followers. He recollected the wrong done to his mother, and to himself, her offspring, to whom his father had, in the face of the whole world, imparted the hereditary rights, of which he was now, by a posthumous deed, endeavouring to deprive the memory of the one, and the expectations of the other. Surely, the right being his own, he had a full title, by the most effectual means, whatever such means might be, to repel himself of all

attacks on that right, and even destroy, if necessary, the documents by which his enemies were prosecuting their unjust pláns against his honour and interest.

This reasoning prevailed, and Lord Etherington again held the devoted packet above the flames; when it occurred to him, that, his resolution being taken, he ought to carry it into execution as effectually as possible; and to do so, it was necessary to know, that the packet actually contained the papers which he was desirous to destroy.

Never did a doubt arise in juster time; for no sooner had the seal burst, and the envelope rustled under his fingers, than he perceived, to his utter consternation, that he held in his hand only the copies of the deeds for which Francis Tyrrel had written, the originals of which he had too sanguinely concluded would be forwarded according to his requisition. A letter from a partner of the house with which they were deposited, stated, that they had not felt themselves at liberty, in the absence of the head of their firm, to whom these papers had been committed, to part with

them even to Mr Tyrrel; though they had proceeded so far as to open the parcel, and now transmitted to him formal copies of the papers contained in it, which, they presumed, would serve Mr Tyrrel's purpose for consulting counsel, or the like. They themselves, in a case of so much delicacy, and in the absence of their principal partner, were determined to retain the originals, unless called to produce them in a court of justice.

With a solemn imprecation on the formality and absurdity of the writer, Lord Etherington let the letter of advice drop from his hand into the fire, and throwing himself into a chair, passed his hand across his eyes, as if their very power of sight had been blighted by what he had read. His title, and his paternal fortune, which he thought but an instant before might be rendered unchallengeable by a single movement of his hand, seemed now on the verge of being lost for ever. His rapid recollection failed not to remind him of what was less known to the world, that his early and profuse expenditure had greatly dilapidated his maternal fortune; and that the estate of Nettlewood, which five minutes ago he only co-

voted as a wealthy man desires increase of his store, must now be acquired, if he would avoid being a very poor and embarrassed spendthrift. To impede his possessing himself of this property, fate had restored to the scene the penitent of the morning, who, as he had too much reason to believe, was returned to this neighbourhood, to do justice to Clara Mowbray, and who was not unlikely to put the whole story of the marriage on its right footing. She, however, might be got rid of; and it might still be possible to hurry Miss Mowbray, by working on her fears, or through the agency of her brother, into an union with him, while he still preserved the title of Lord Etherington. This, therefore, he resolved to secure, if effort or if intrigue could carry the point; nor was it the least consideration, that should he succeed, he would obtain over Tyrrel, his successful rival, such a triumph, as would be sufficient to embitter the tranquillity of his whole life.

In a few minutes, his rapid and contriving invention had formed a plan for securing the sole advantage which seemed to remain open for him;

and conscious that he had no time to lose, he entered immediately upon the execution.

The bell summoned Solmes to his lord's apartment, when the Earl, as coolly as if he had hoped to dupe his experienced valet by such an assertion, said, "You have brought me a packet designed for some man at the Aulton—let it be sent to him—Stay, I will re-seal it first."

He accordingly re-sealed the packet, containing all the writings, excepting the letter of ad vice, (which he had burnt,) and gave it to the valet, with the caution, "I wish you would not make such blunders in future."

"I beg your lordship's pardon—I will take better care again—thought it was addressed to your lordship."

So answered Solmes, too knowing to give the least look of intelligence, far less to remind the Earl that his own directions had occasioned the mistake of which he complained.

"Solmes," continued the Earl, "you need not mention your blunder at the post-office; it would only occasion tattle in this idle place—but

be sure that the gentleman has his letter.—And, Solmes, I see Mr Mowbray walk across—ask him to dine with me to-day at five. I have a head-ache, and cannot face the clamour of the savages who feed at the public table.—And—let me see—make my compliments to Lady Penelope Penfeather—I will certainly have the honour of waiting on her ladyship this evening to tea, agreeable to her very boreing invitation received—write her a proper card, and word it your own way. Bespeak dinner for two, and see you have some of that batch of Burgundy." The servant was retiring, when his master added, "Stay a moment—I have a more important business than I have yet mentioned—Solmes, you have managed devilish ill about the woman Irwin!"

"I, my lord?" answered Solmes.

"You, you, sir—did you not tell me she had gone to the West Indies with a friend of yours, and did not I give them a couple of hundred pounds for passage-money?"

"Yes, my lord," replied the valet.

" Ay, but now it proves *no*, my lord," said Lord Etherington ; " for she has found her way back to this country in miserable plight—half-starved, and, no doubt, willing to do or say anything for a livelihood—-How has this happened ?"

" Biddulph must have taken her cash, and turned her loose, my lord," answered Solmes, as if he had been speaking of the most common-place transaction in the world ; " but I know the woman's nature so well, and am so much master of her history, that I can carry her off the country in twenty-four hours, and place her where she will never think of returning, provided your lordship can spare me so long."

" About it directly—but I can tell you, that you will find the woman in a very penitential humour, and very ill in health to boot."

" I am sure of my game," answered Solmes ; " with submission to your lordship, I think if death and her good angel had hold of one of that woman's arms, the devil and I could make a shift to lead her away by the other."

" Away and about it, then," said Etherington. " But, hark ye, Solmes, be kind to her, and see

all her wants relieved.—I have done her mischief enough—though nature and the devil had done half the work to my hand."

Solmes at length was permitted to withdraw to execute his various commissions, with an assurance that his services would not be wanted for the next twenty-four hours.

"Soh!" said the Earl, as his agent withdrew, "there is a spring put in motion, which, well oiled, will move the whole machine—And here, in lucky time, comes Harry Jekyl—I hear his whistle on the stairs.—There is a silly lightness of heart about that fellow, which I envy, while I despise it; but he is welcome now, for I want him."

Jekyl entered accordingly, and broke out with, "I am glad to see one of your fellows laying a cloth for two in your parlour, Etherington —I was afraid you were going down among these confounded bores again to-day."

"*You* are not to be one of the two, Hal," answered Lord Etherington.

"No?—then I may be a third, I hope, if not second?"

" Neither first, second, nor third, Captain.—The truth is, I want a tête-a-tête with Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's," replied the Earl; " and, besides, I have to beg the very particular favour of you to go again to that fellow Martigny. It is time that he should produce his papers, if he has any—of which, for one, I do not believe a word. He has had ample time to hear from London; and I think I have delayed long enough in an important matter upon his bare assertion."

" I cannot blame your impatience," said Jekyl, " and I will go on your errand instantly. As you waited on my advice, I am bound to find an end to your suspense.—At the same time, if the man is not possessed of such papers as he spoke of, I must own he is happy in a command of consummate assurance, which might set up the whole roll of attorneys."

" You will be soon able to judge of that," said Lord Etherington; " and now, off with you.—Why do you look at me so anxiously?"

" I cannot tell—I have strange forebodings about this tête-a-tête with Mowbray. You should

spare him, Etherington—he is not your match—wants both judgment and temper."

"Tell him so, Jekyl," answered the Earl, "and his proud Scotch stomach will be up in an instant, and he will pay you with a shot for your pains.—Why, he thinks himself Cock of the walk, this strutting bantam, notwithstanding the lesson I gave him before—And what do you think?—he has the impudence to talk about my attentions to Lady Binks as inconsistent with the prosecution of my suit to his sister! Yes, Hal—this awkward Scotch laird, that has scarce tact enough to make love to a ewe-milker, or, at best, to some daggle-tailed soubrette, has the assurance to start himself as my rival!"

"Then, good night to St Ronan's!—this will be a fatal dinner to him.—Etherington, I know by that laugh you are bent on mischief—I have a great mind to give him a hint."

"I wish you would," answered the Earl; "it would all turn to my account."

"Do you defy me?—Well, if I meet him, I will put him on his guard."

The friends parted; and it was not long ere

Jekyl encountered Mowbray on one of the public walks.

"You dine with Etherington to-day?" said the Captain—"Forgive me, Mr Mowbray, if I say one single word—Beware."

"Of what should I beware, Captain Jekyl," answered Mowbray, "when I dine with a friend of your own, and a man of honour?"

"Certainly Lord Etherington is both, Mr Mowbray; but he loves play, and is too hard for most people."

"I thank you for your hint, Captain Jekyl—I am a raw Scotchman, it is true; but yet, I know a thing or two. Fair play is always presumed amongst gentlemen; and that taken for granted, I have the vanity to think I need no one's caution on the subject, not even Captain Jekyl's, though his experience must needs be so much superior to mine."

"In that case, sir," said Jekyl, bowing coldly, 'I have no more to say, and I hope there is no harm done.—Conceited coxcomb!" he added, mentally, as they parted, "how truly did Etherington judge of him, and what an ass was I to

intermeddle!—I hope Etherington will strip him of every feather."

He pursued his walk in quest of Tyrrel, and Mowbray proceeded to the apartments of the Earl, in a temper of mind well suited to the purposes of the latter, who judged of his disposition accurately when he permitted Jekyl to give his well-meant warning. To be supposed by a man of acknowledged fashion, so decidedly inferior to his antagonist—to be considered as an object of compassion, and made the subject of a good-boy warning, was gall and bitterness to his proud spirit, which, the more that he felt a conscious inferiority in the arts which they all cultivated, struggled the more to preserve the footing of at least apparent equality.

Since the first memorable party at piquet, Mowbray had never hazarded his luck with Lord Etherington, except for trifling stakes; but his conceit led him to suppose, that he now fully understood his play, and, agreeably to the practice of those who have habituated themselves to gambling, he had, every now and then, felt a yearning to try for his revenge. He wished also to be

out of Lord Etherington's debt, feeling galled under a sense of pecuniary obligation, which hindered his speaking his mind to him fully upon the subject of his flirtation with Lady Binks, which he justly considered as an insult to his family, considering the footing on which the Earl seemed desirous to stand with Clara Mowbray. From these obligations a favourable evening might free him, and Mowbray was, in fact, indulging in a waking dream to this purpose, when Jekyl interrupted him. His untimely warning only excited a spirit of contradiction, and a determination to shew the adviser how little he was qualified to judge of his talents; and in this humour, his ruin, which was the consequence of that afternoon, was far from even seeming to be the premeditated, or even the voluntary work of the Earl of Etherington.

On the contrary, the victim himself was the first to propose play—deep play—double stakes. While Lord Etherington, on the contrary, often proposed to diminish their game, or to break off entirely; but it was always with an affectation of superiority, which only stimulated Mowbray to

farther and more desperate risks; and, at last, when Mowbray became his debtor to an overwhelming amount, (his circumstances considered,) the Earl threw down the cards, and declared he should be too late for Lady Penelope's tea-party, to which he was positively engaged.

"Will you not give me my revenge?" said Mowbray, taking up the cards, and shuffling them with fierce anxiety.

"Not now, Mowbray; we have played too long already—you have lost too much—more than perhaps is convenient for you to pay."

Mowbray gnashed his teeth, in spite of his resolution to maintain an exterior, at least, of firmness.

"You can take your time, you know," said the Earl; "a note of hand will suit me as well as the money."

"No, by G——," answered Mowbray, "I will not be so taken in a second time—I had better have sold myself to the devil than to your lordship.—I have never been my own man since."

"These are not very kind expressions, Mowbray," said the Earl; "you *would* play, and

they that will play must expect sometimes to lose—"

"And they who win will expect to be paid," said Mowbray, breaking in. "I know that as well as you, my lord, and you shall be paid—I will pay you—I will pay you, by G—— ! Do you make any doubt that I will pay you, my lord?"

"You look as if you thought of paying me in sharp coin," said Lord Etherington; "and I think that would scarce be consistent with the terms we stand upon towards each other."

"By my soul, my lord," said Mowbray, "I cannot tell what these terms are; and to be at my wit's end at once, I should be glad to know. You set out upon paying addresses to my sister, and with your visits and opportunities at Shaws-Castle, I cannot find the matter makes the least progress—it keeps moving without advancing, like a child's rocking-horse. Perhaps you think that you have curbed me up so tightly, that I dare not stir in the matter; but you will find it otherwise.—Your lordship may keep a haram if you will, but my sister shall not enter it."

"You are angry, and therefore you are un-

just," said Etherington; "you know well enough it is your sister's fault that there is any delay. I am most willing—most desirous to call her Lady Etherington—nothing but her unlucky prejudices against me have retarded a union which I have so many reasons for desiring."

"Well," replied Mowbray, "that shall be my business. I know no reason she can pretend to decline a marriage so honourable to her house, and which is approved of by me, that house's head. That matter shall be arranged in twenty-four hours."

"It will do me the most sensible pleasure," said Lord Etherington; "you shall soon see how sincerely I desire your alliance; and as for the trifle you have lost——"

"It is no trifle to me, my lord—it is my ruin—but it shall be paid—and let me tell your lordship, you may thank your good luck for it more than your good play."

"We will say no more of it at present, if you please," said Lord Etherington, "to-morrow is a new day; and if you will take my advice, you will not be too harsh with your sister. A little

firmness is seldom amiss with young women, but severity——"

"I will pray your lordship to spare me your advice on this subject. However valuable it may be in other respects, I can, I take it, speak to my own sister in my own way."

"Since you are so caustically disposed, Mowbray," answered the Earl, "I presume you will not honour her ladyship's tea-table to-night, though I believe it will be the last of the season?"

"And why should you think so, my lord?" answered Mowbray, whose losses had rendered him testy and contradictory upon every subject that was started. "Why should not I pay my respects to Lady Penelope, or any other tabby of quality? I have no title, indeed, but I suppose that my family——"

"Entitles you to become a canon of Strasburgh, doubtless—But you do not seem in a very Christian mood for taking orders. All I meant to say was, that you and Lady Pen were not used to be on such a good footing."

"Well, she sent me a card for her blow-out,"

said Mowbray; "and so I am resolved to go. When I have been there half an hour, I will ride up to Shaws-Castle, and you shall hear of my speed in wooing for you to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER VIII

A TEA-PARTY.

Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups
That cheer, but not inebriate, wait on each,
Thus let us welcome peaceful evening in.
COWPER'S *Task*

THE approach of the cold and rainy season had now so far thinned the company at the Well, that, in order to secure the necessary degree of crowd upon her tea-nights, Lady Penelope was obliged to employ some coaxing, towards those whom she had considered as much under par in society. Even the Doctor and Mrs Blower were graciously smiled upon—for their marriage was now an arranged affair; and the event was of a nature likely to spread the repu-

tation of the Spaw among wealthy widows, and medical gentlemen of more skill than practice. So in they came, the Doctor smirking, gallanting, and performing all the bustling parade of settled and arranged courtship, with much of that grace wherewith a turkey-cock goes through the same ceremony. Old Touchwood had also attended her ladyship's summons, chiefly, it may be supposed, from his restless fidgetty disposition, which seldom suffered him to remain absent even from those places of resort, of which he usually professed his detestation. There was, besides, Mr Winterblossom, who, in his usual spirit of quiet epicurism and self-indulgence, was, under the fire of a volley of compliments to Lady Penelope, scheming to secure for himself an early cup of tea. There was Lady Binks also, with the wonted degree of sullenness in her beautiful face, angry at her husband as usual, and not disposed to be pleased with Lord Etherington for being absent, when she desired to excite Sir Bingo's jealousy. This she had discovered to be the most effectual way of tormenting the Baronet, and she rejoiced in it with the savage glee of a hackney coach-

man, who has found a *raw*, where he can make his poor jade feel the whip. The rest of the company were also in attendance as usual. MacTurk himself was present, notwithstanding that he thought it an egregious waste of hot water, to bestow it upon compounding any mixture, saving punch. He had of late associated himself a good deal with the traveller; not that they by any means resembled each other in temper or opinions, but rather because there was that degree of difference betwixt them which furnished perpetual subject for dispute and discussion. They were not long, on the present occasion, ere they lighted on a fertile source of controversy.

"Never tell me of your points of honour," said Touchwood, raising his voice altogether above the general tone of polite conversation—"all humbug, Captain MacTurk—mere hair-traps to springe wood-cocks—men of sense break through them."

"Upon my word, sir," said the Captain, "and myself is surprised to hear you—for, look you, sir, every man's honour is the breath of his nostrils—Cot tamn!"

"Then, let men breathe through their mouths and be d—d," returned the controversialist. "I tell you, sir, that, besides its being forbidden both by law and gospel, it's an idiotical and totally absurd practice, that of duelling. An honest savage has more sense than to practise it—he takes his bow or his gun, as the thing may be, and shoots his enemy from behind a bush. And a very good way; for you see there can, in that case, be only one man's death between them."

"Saul of my body, sir," said the Captain, "gin ye promulgate sic doctrines among the good company, it's my belief you will bring somebody to the gallows."

"Thank ye, Captain, with all my heart; but I stir up no quarrels—I leave war to them that live by it. I only say, that, except our old, stupid ancestors in the north-west here, I know no country so silly as to harbour this custom of duelling. It is unknown in Africa, among the negroes—in America."

"Don't tell me that," said the Captain; "a

Yankee will fight with muskets and buck-shot rather than sit still with an affront. I should know Jonathan, I think."

" Altogether unknown among the thousand tribes of India."

" I'll be tamned, then!" said Captain MacTurk. " Was I not in Tippoo's prison at Bangalore? and, when the joyful day of our liberation came, did we not solemnize it with fourteen little affairs, whereof we had been laying the foundation in our house of captivity, as holy writ has it, and never went farther to settle them than the glacis of the fort? By my soul, you would have thought there was a smart skirmish, the firing was so close; and did not I, Captain MacTurk, fight three of them myself, without moving my foot from the place I set it on?"

" And pray, sir, what might be the result of this Christian mode of giving thanks for your deliverance?" demanded Mr Touchwood.

" A small list of casualties, after all," said the Captain; " one killed on the spot, one died of his wounds—two severely wounded—three ditto, slightly, and little Duncan Macphail reported

missing. We were out of practice, after such long confinement. So you see how we manage matters in India, my dear friend."

"You are to understand," replied Touchwood, "that I spoke only of the heathen natives, who, heathen as they are, live in the light of their own moral reason, and among whom ye shall therefore see better examples of practical morality than among such as yourselves; who, though calling yourselves Christians, have no more knowledge of the true acceptation and meaning of your religion, than if you had left your religion at the Cape of Good Hope, as they say of you, and forgot to take it up when you came back again."

"Py Cot, and I can tell you, sir," said the Captain, elevating at once his voice and his nostrils, and snuffing the air with a truculent and indignant visage, "that I will not permit you or any man to throw any such scandal on my character. —I thank Cot, I can bring good witness that I am as good a Christian as another, for a poor sinner, as the best of us are; and I am ready to justify my religion with my sword—Cot tamn!—

Compare my own self with a parcel of black heathen bodies and natives, that were never in the inner side of a kirk whilst they lived, but go about worshipping stocks and stones, and swinging themselves upon bamboos, like peasts, as they are!'

An indignant growling in his throat, which sounded like the acquiescence of his inward man in the indignant proposition which his external organs thus expressed, concluded this haughty speech, which, however, made not the least impression on Touchwood, who cared as little for angry tones and looks as he did for fine speeches. So that it is likely a quarrel between the Christian preceptor and the peace-maker might have occurred for the amusement of the company, had not the attention of both, but particularly that of Touchwood, been diverted from the topic of debate by the entrance of Lord Etherington and Mowbray.

The former was, as usual, all grace, smiles, and gentleness. Yet, contrary to his wonted custom, which usually was, after a few general compliments, to attach himself particularly to

Lady Binks, the Earl, on the present occasion, avoided the side of the room on which that beautiful but sullen idol held her station, and attached himself exclusively to Lady Penelope Penfeather, enduring, without flinching, the strange variety of conceited *bavardage*, which 'that lady's natural parts and acquired information enabled her to pour forth with unparalleled profusion.

An honest heathen, one of Plutarch's heroes, if I mistake not, dreamed once upon a night, that the figure of Proserpina, whom he had long worshipped, visited his slumbers with an angry and vindictive countenance, and menaced him with vengeance, in resentment of his having neglected her altars, with the usual fickleness of a Polytheist, for those of some more fashionable divinity. Not that goddess of the infernal regions herself could assume a more haughty or more displeased countenance than that with which Lady Binks looked from time to time upon Lord Etherington, as if to warn him of the consequence of this departure from the allegiance which the young Earl had hitherto manifested towards her, and which seemed now, she knew not why, unless it were for

the purpose of public insult, to be transferred to her rival. Perilous as her eye-glances were, and much as they menaced, Lord Etherington felt at this moment the importance of soothing Lady Penelope to silence on the subject of the invalid's confession of that morning to be more pressing than that of appeasing the indignation of Lady Binks. The former was a case of the most pressing necessity—the latter, if he was at all anxious on the subject, might, he perhaps thought, be trusted to time. Had the ladies continued on a tolerable footing together, he might have endeavoured to conciliate both. But the bitterness of their long suppressed feud had greatly increased, now that it was probable the end of the season was to separate them, probably for ever; so that Lady Penelope had no longer any motive for countenancing Lady Binks, or the lady of Sir Bingo for desiring Lady Penelope's countenance. The wealth and lavish expense of the one was no longer to render more illustrious the suite of her right honourable friend, nor was the society of Lady Penelope likely to be soon again useful or necessary to Lady Binks.

So that neither were any longer desirous to suppress symptoms of the mutual contempt and dislike which they had long nourished for each other; and whosoever should, in this decisive hour, take part with one, had little henceforward to expect from the other. What farther and more private reasons Lady Binks might have to resent the defection of Lord Etherington, have never come with certainty to our knowledge; but it was said there had been high words between them on the floating report that Lord Etherington's visits to Shaws-Castle were dictated by the wish to find a bride there.

Women's wits are said to be quick in spying the surest means of avenging a real or supposed slight. After biting her pretty lips, and revolving in her mind the readiest means of vengeance, fate threw in her way young Mowbray of St Ronan's. She looked at him, and endeavoured to fix his attention with a nod and gracious smile, such as in an ordinary mood would have instantly drawn him to her side. On receiving in answer only a vacant glance and a bow, she was led to observe him more attentively, and was induced to be-

lieve, from his wavering look, varying complexion, and unsteady step, that he had been drinking unusually deep. Still his eye was less that of an intoxicated than of a disturbed and desperate man, one whose faculties were engrossed by deep and turbid reflection, which withdrew him from the passing scene.

"Do you observe how ill Mr Mowbray looks?" said she, in a loud whisper; "I hope he has not heard what Lady Penelope was just now saying of his family?"

"Unless he hears it from you, my lady," answered Mr Touchwood, who, upon Mowbray's entrance, had broken off his discourse with MacTurk, "I think there is little chance of his learning it from any other person."

"What is the matter?" said Mowbray, sharply, addressing Chatterley and Winterblossom; but the one shrunk from the question, protesting, he indeed had not been precisely attending to what had been passing among the ladies, and Winterblossom bowed out of the scrape with quiet and cautious politeness—"he really had not given particular attention to what was pass-

ing—I was negotiating with Mrs Jones for an additional lump of sugar to my coffee.—Egad, it was so difficult a piece of diplomacy," he added, sinking his voice, " that I have an idea her ladyship calculates the West India produce by grains and pennyweights."

The inuendo, if designed to make Mowbray smile, was far from succeeding. He stepped forward with more than usual stiffness in his air, which was never entirely free from self-consequence, and said to Lady Binks, " May I request to know of your ladyship what particular respecting my family had the honour to engage the attention of the company?"

" I was only a listener, Mr Mowbray," returned Lady Binks, with evident enjoyment of the rising indignation which she read in his countenance; " not being queen of the night, I am not at all disposed to be answerable for the turn of the conversation."

Mowbray, in no humour to bear jesting, yet afraid to expose himself by farther inquiry in a company so public, darted a fierce look at Lady Penelope, then in close conversation with Lord

Etherington,—advanced a step or two towards them,—then, as if checking himself, turned on his heel, and left the room. A few minutes afterwards, and when certain satirical nods and winks were circulating among the assembly, a waiter slid a piece of paper into Mrs Jones's hand, who, on looking at the contents, seemed about to leave the room.

"Jones—Jones!" exclaimed Lady Penelope, in surprise and displeasure.

"Only the key of the tea-caddie, your ladyship," answered Jones, "I will be back in an instant."

"Jones—Jones!" again exclaimed her mistress, "here is enough—" of tea, she would have said, but Lord Etherington was so near her, that she was ashamed to complete the sentence, and had only hope in Jones's quickness of apprehension, and the prospect that she would be unable to find the key which she went in search of.

Jones, meanwhile, tripped off to a sort of housekeeper's apartment, of which she was *locum tenens* for the evening, for the more ready

supply of whatever might be wanted on Lady Penelope's night, as it was called. Here she found Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's, whom she instantly began to assail with "La! now, Mr Mowbray, you are such another gentleman!—I am sure you will make me lose my place—I'll swear you will—what can you have to say, that you could not as well put off for an hour?"

"I want to know, Jones," answered Mowbray, in a different tone, perhaps, from what the damsel expected, "what your lady was just now saying about my family."

"Pshaw!—was that all?" answered Mrs Jones. "What should she be saying?—nonsense—Who minds what she says?—I am sure I never do, for one."

"Nay, but, my dear Jones," said Mowbray, "I insist upon knowing—I must know, and I *will* know."

"La! Mr Mowbray, why should I make mischief?—as I live, I hear some one coming! and if you were found speaking with me here—indeed, indeed, some one is coming!"

"The devil may come, if he will!" said Mowbray, "but we do not part, pretty mistress, till you tell me what I wish to know."

"Lord, sir, you frighten me!" answered Jones; "but all the room heard it as well as I—it was about Miss Mowbray—and that my lady would be shy of her company hereafter—for that she was—she was—"

"For that my sister was *what*?" said Mowbray, fiercely, seizing her arm.

"Lord, sir, you terrify me," said Jones, beginning to cry; "at any rate, it was not I that said it—it was Lady Penelope."

"And what was it the old, adder-tongued madwoman dared to say of Clara Mowbray?—Speak out plainly, and directly, or, by Heaven, I'll make you!"

"Hold, sir—hold, for God's sake!—you will break my arm," answered the terrified handmaiden. "I am sure I know no harm of Miss Mowbray; only, my lady spoke as if she was no better than she ought to be.—Lord, sir, there is some one listening to the door!"—and ma-

king a spring out of his grasp, she hastened back to the room in which the company were assembled.

Mowbray stood petrified at the news he had heard, ignorant alike what could be the motive for a calumny so atrocious, and uncertain what he were best do to put a stop to the scandal To his farther confusion, he was presently convinced of the truth of Mrs Jones's belief that they had been watched, for, as he went to the door of the apartment, he was met by Mr Touchwood.

"What has brought you here, sir?" said Mowbray, sternly.

"Hoitie toitie," answered the traveller, "why, how came *you* here, if you go to that, squire?—Egad, Lady Penelope is trembling for her souchong, so I just took a step here to save her ladyship the trouble of looking after Mrs Jones in person, which, I think, might have been a worse interruption than mine, Mr Mowbray."

"Pshaw, sir, you talk nonsense," said Mowbray; "the tea-room is so infernally hot, that I

had sat down here a moment to draw breath, when the young woman came in."

"And you are going to run away, now the old gentleman is come in," said Touchwood—"Come, sir, I am more your friend than you may think."

"Sir, you are intrusive—I want nothing that you can give me," said Mowbray.

"That is a mistake," answered the senior; "for I can supply you with what most young men want—money and wisdom."

"You will do well to keep both till they are wanted," said Mowbray.

"Why, so I would, squire, only that I have taken something of a fancy for your family; and they are supposed to have wanted cash and good counsel for two generations, if not for three."

"Sir," said Mowbray, angrily, "you are too old either to play the buffoon, or to get buffoon's payment."

"Which is like monkey's allowance, I suppose," said the traveller, "more kicks than halfpence

—Well—at least I am not young enough to quarrel with boys for bullying. I'll convince you, however, Mr Mowbray, that I know some more of your affairs than what you give me credit for."

"It may be," answered Mowbray; "but you will oblige me more by minding your own."

"Very like; meantime, your losses to-night to my Lord Etherington are no trifle, and no secret neither."

"Mr Touchwood, I desire to know where you had your information?" said Mowbray.

"A matter of very little consequence compared to its truth or falsehood, Mr Mowbray," answered the old gentleman.

"But of the last importance to me, sir," said Mowbray. "In a word, had you such information by or through means of Lord Etherington?—Answer me this single question, and then I shall know better what to think on the subject."

"Upon my honour," said Touchwood, "I neither had my information from Lord Ether-

ington directly or indirectly. I say thus much to give you satisfaction, and I now expect you will hear me with patience."

"Forgive me, sir," interrupted Mowbray, "one farther question. I understand something was said in disparagement of my sister just as I entered the tea-room?"

"Hem—hem—hem," said Touchwood, hesitating. "I am sorry your ears have served you so well—something there *was* said lightly, something that can be easily explained, I dare say;—and now, Mr Mowbray, let me speak a few serious words with you."

"And now, Mr Touchwood, we have no more to say to each other—good evening to you."

He brushed past the old man, who in vain endeavoured to stop him, and, hurrying to the stable, demanded his horse. It was ready saddled, and waited his orders; but even the short time that was necessary to bring it to the door of the stable was exasperating to Mowbray's impatience. Not less exasperating was the constant interceding voice of Touchwood, who, in

tones alternately plaintive and snappish, kept on a string of expostulations.

"Mr Mowbray, only five words with you—Mr Mowbray, you will repent this—Is this a night to ride in, Mr Mowbray?—My stars, sir, if you would but have five minutes patience!"

Curses not loud but deep, muttered in the throat of the impatient laird, were the only reply until his horse was brought out, when, staying no farther question, he sprung into the saddle. The poor horse paid for the delay, which could not be laid to his charge. Mowbray struck him hard with his spurs so soon as he was in his seat—the noble animal reared, bolted, and sprung forward like a deer, over stock and stone, the nearest road—and we are aware it was a rough one—to Shaw's-Castle. There is a sort of instinct by which horses perceive the humour of their riders, and are furious and impetuous, or dull and sluggish, as if to correspond with it; and Mowbray's gallant steed seemed on this occasion to feel all the stings of his master's internal ferment, al-

though not again urged with the spur. The ostler stood listening to the clash of the hoofs succeeding each other in thick and close gallop, until they died away in the distant woodland.

"If St Ronan's reach home this night, with his neck unbroken," muttered the fellow, "the devil must have it in keeping."

"Mercy on us!" said the traveller, "he rides like a Bedouin Arab! but in the desert there are neither trees to cross the road, nor cleughs, nor linns, nor floods, nor fords. Well, I must set to work myself, or this gear will get worse than even I can mend.—Here you, ostler, let me have your best pair of horses instantly to Shaws-Castle."

"To Shaws-Castle, sir?" said the man, with some surprise.

"Yes—do you not know such a place?"

"In troth, sir, sae few company go there, except on the great ball day, that we have had time to forget the road to it—but St Ronan's was here even now, sir."

" Ay, what of that?—he has ridden on to get supper ready—so, turn out without loss of time."

" At your pleasure, sir," said the fellow, and called to the postilion accordingly.

CHAPTER IX.

DEBATE.

Sedet post equitem atra cura.——————

Still though the headlong cavalier,
O'er rough and smooth, in wild career,
  Seems racing with the wind;
His sad companion,—ghastly pale,
And darksome as a widow's veil,
  CARE—keeps her seat behind.
HORACE.

WELL was it that night for Mowbray, that he had always piqued himself on his horses, and that the animal on which he was then mounted was as sure-footed and sagacious as he was mettled and fiery. For those who observed next day the print of the hoofs on the broken and rugged track through which the creature had been driven at full speed by his furious master, might easily see, that in more than a dozen of places the horse and rider had been within a few inches of destruction. One bough of a gnarled and stunted

oak tree, which stretched across the road, seemed in particular to have opposed an almost fatal barrier to the horseman's career. In striking his head against this impediment, the force of the blow had been broken in some measure by a high-crowned hat, yet the violence of the shock was sufficient to shiver the branch to pieces. Fortunately, it was already decayed; but, even in that state, it was subject of astonishment to every one that no fatal damage had been sustained in so formidable an encounter. Mowbray himself was unconscious of the accident.

Scarce aware that he had been riding at an unusual rate, scarce sensible that he had ridden faster perhaps than ever he followed the hounds, Mowbray alighted at his stable door, and flung the bridle to his groom, who held up his hands in astonishment when he beheld the condition of the favourite horse; but, concluding that his master must be intoxicated, he prudently forbore to make any observations.

No sooner did the unfortunate traveller suspend that rapid motion by which he seemed to wish to annihilate, as far as possible, time and

space, in order to reach the place he had now attained, than it seemed to him as if he would have given the world that seas and deserts had lain between him and the house of his fathers, as well as that only sister with whom he was now about to have a decisive interview.

"But the place and the hour are arrived," he said, biting his lip with anguish; "this explanation must be decisive; and whatever evils may attend it, suspense must be ended now, at once and for ever."

He entered the Castle, and took the light from the old domestic, who, hearing the clatter of his horse's feet, had opened the door to receive him.

"Is my sister in her parlour?" he asked, but in so hollow a voice, that the old man only answered the question by another, "Was his honour well?"

"Quite well, Patrick—never better in my life," said Mowbray; and, turning his back on the old man, as if to prevent his observing whether his countenance and his words corresponded, he pursued his way to his sister's apartment. The

sound of his step upon the passage roused Clara from a reverie, perhaps a sad one; and she had trimmed her lamp, and stirred her fire, so slow did he walk, before he at length entered her apartment.

"You are a good boy, brother," she said, "to come thus early home; and I have some good news for your reward. The groom has fetched back Trimmer—He was lying by the dead hare, and he had chased him as far as Drumlyford—the shepherd had carried him to the shieling, till some one should claim him."

"I would he had hanged him, with all my heart," said Mowbray.

"How?—hang Trimmer?—your favourite Trimmer, that has beat the whole country?—and it was only this morning you were half-crying because he was amissing, and like to murder man and mother's son."

"The better I like any living thing," answered Mowbray, "the more reason I have for wishing it dead and at rest; for neither I, nor anything that I love, will ever be happy more."

"You cannot frighten me, John, with these

flights," answered Clara, trembling, although she endeavoured to look unconcerned—"You have used me to them too often."

"It is well for you, then; you will be ruined without the shock of surprise."

"So much the better—We have been," said Clara,

"'So constantly in poortith's sight,
The thoughts on't gie us little fright.'

So say I with honest Robert Burns."

"D—n Burns and his trash!" said Mowbray, with the impatience of a man determined to be angry with everything but himself, who was the real source of the evil.

"And why damn poor Burns?" said Clara, composedly; "it is not his fault if you have not risen a winner, for that, I suppose, is the cause of all this uproar."

"Would it not make any one lose patience," said Mowbray, "to hear her quoting the rhapsodies of a hobnail'd peasant, when a man is speaking of the downfall of an ancient house! Your ploughman, I suppose, becoming one de-

gree poorer than he was born to be, would only go without his dinner, or without his usual potation of ale. His comrades would cry 'poor fellow!' and let him eat out of their kit, and drink out of their bicker without scruple, till his own is full again. But the poor gentleman—the downfallen man of rank—the degraded man of birth—the disabled and disarmed man of power! —it is he that is to be pitied, who loses not merely drink and dinner, but honour, situation, credit, character, and name itself!"

"You are declaiming in this manner in order to terrify me," said Clara; "but, friend John, I know you and your ways, and I have made up my mind upon all contingencies that can take place. I will tell you more—I have stood on this tottering pinnacle of rank and fashion, if our situation can be termed such, till my head is dizzy with the instability of my eminence; and I feel that strange desire of tossing myself down, which the devil is said to put into folks' heads when they stand on the top of steeples—at least, I had rather the plunge were over."

"Be satisfied then, if that will satisfy you—

the plunge *is* over, and we are—what they used to call it in Scotland—gentle beggars — creatures to whom our second, and third, and fourth, and fifth cousins may, if they please, give a place at the side-table, and a seat in the carriage with the lady's maid, if driving backwards will not make us sick."

" They may give it to those who will take it," said Clara ; " but I am determined to eat bread of my own buying—I can do twenty things, and I am sure some one or other of them will bring me all the little money I will need. I have been trying, John, for several months, how little I can live upon, and you would laugh if you heard how low I have brought the account."

" There is a difference, Clara, between fanciful experiments and real poverty—the one is a masquerade, which we can end when we please, the other is wretchedness for life."

" Methinks, brother," replied Miss Mowbray, " it would be better for you to set me an example how to carry my good resolutions into effect, than to ridicule them."

" Why, what would you have me do ?" said

he, fiercely—" turn postilion, or rough-rider, or whipper-in?—I don'tknow anything else that my education, as I have used it, has fitted me for—and then some of my old acquaintances would, I dare say, give me a crown to drink now and then for old acquaintance sake."

" This is not the way, John, that men of sense think or speak of serious misfortunes," answered his sister; " and I do not believe that this is so serious as it is your pleasure to make it."

" Believe the very worst you can think," replied he, " and you will not believe bad enough!—You have neither a guinea, nor a house, nor a friend;—pass but a day, and it is a chance that you will not have a brother."

" My dear John, you have drunk hard—rode hard."

" Yes—such tidings deserved to be carried express, especially to a young lady who receives them so well," answered Mowbray, bitterly. " I suppose, now, it will make no impression, if I were to tell you that you have it in your power to stop all this ruin?"

" By consummating my own, I suppose—

Brother, I said you could not make me tremble, but you have found a way to do it."

"What, you expect I am again to urge you with Lord Etherington's courtship?—That *might* have saved all, indeed—But that day of grace is over."

"I am glad of it, with all my spirit," said Clara; "may it take with it all that we can quarrel about!—But till this instant, I thought it was for this very point that this long voyage was bound, and that you were endeavouring to persuade me of the reality of the danger of the storm, in order to reconcile me to the harbour."

"You are mad, I think, in earnest," said Mowbray; "can you really be so absurd as to rejoice you have no way left to relieve yourself and me from ruin, want, and shame?"

"From shame, brother?" said Clara. "No shame in honest poverty, I hope."

"That is according as folks have used their prosperity Clara.—I must speak to the point.—There are strange reports going below—By Heaven! they are enough to disturb the ashes of the dead! Were I to mention them, I should ex-

pect our poor mother to enter the room.—Clara Mowbray, can you guess what I mean?"

It was with the utmost exertion, yet in a faultering voice, that she was able, after an ineffectual effort, to utter the monosyllable, "*No!*"

"By Heaven! I am ashamed—I am even *afraid* to express my own meaning!—Clara, what is there which makes you so obstinately reject every proposal of marriage?—Is it that you feel yourself unworthy to be the wife of an honest man?—Speak out!—Evil Fame has been busy with your reputation—Speak out!—Give me the right to cram their lies down the throats of the inventors, and when I go among them to-morrow, I shall know how to treat those who cast reflections on you! The fortunes of our house are ruined, but no tongue shall slander its honour.—Speak—speak, wretched girl! why are you silent?"

"Stay at home, brother," said Clara; "stay at home, if you regard our house's honour—murder cannot mend misery—Stay at home, and let them talk of me as they will,—they cannot say worse than I deserve!"

The passions of Mowbray, at all times ungovernably strong, were at present inflamed by wine, by his rapid journey, and the previously disturbed state of his mind. He set his teeth, clenched his hands, looked on the ground, as one that forms some horrid resolution, and muttered almost unintelligibly, "It were charity to kill her."

"Oh! no—no—no!" exclaimed the terrified girl, throwing herself at his feet; "Do not kill me, brother. I have wished for death—thought of death—prayed for death—but, oh! it is frightful to think that he is near—Oh! not a bloody death, brother, nor by your hand!"

She held him close by the knees as she spoke, and expressed, in her looks and accents, the utmost terror. It was not, indeed, without reason; for the extreme solitude of the place, the lateness of the hour, the violent and inflamed passions of her brother, and the desperate circumstances to which he had reduced himself, seemed all to concur to render some horrid act of violence not an improbable termination of this strange interview.

Mowbray folded his arms, without unclench-

ing his hands, or raising his head, while his sister continued on the floor, clasping him round the knees with all her strength, and begging piteously for her life and for mercy.

"Fool!" he said, at last, "let me go!—Who cares for thy worthless life?—who cares if thou live or die? Live, if thou canst—and be the hate and scorn of every one else, as much as thou art mine!"

He grasped her by the shoulder, with one hand pushed her from him; and, as she arose from the floor, and again pressed to throw her arms around his neck, he repulsed her with his arm and hand, with a push—or blow—it might be termed either one or the other,—violent enough, in her weak state, to have again extended her on the ground, had not a chair received her as she fell. He looked at her with ferocity, grappled a moment in his pocket; then ran to the window, and throwing the sash violently up, thrust himself as far as he could without falling, into the open air. Terrified, and yet her feelings of his unkindness predominating even above her fears, Clara continued to exclaim, "Oh, bro-

ther, say you did not mean this!—Oh, say you did not mean to strike me!—Oh, whatever I have deserved. be not you the executioner!—It is not manly—it is not natural—there are but two of us in the world!"

He returned no answer; and, observing that he continued to stretch himself from the window, which was in the second story of the building, and overlooked the court, a new cause of apprehension mingled, in some measure, with her personal fears. Timidly, and with streaming eyes and uplifted hands, she approached her angry brother, and fearfully, yet firmly, seized the skirt of his coat, as if anxious to preserve him from the effects of that despair, which so lately seemed turned against her, and now against himself.

He felt the pressure of her hold, and drawing himself angrily back, asked her sternly what she wanted.

"Nothing," she said, quitting her hold of his coat; "but what—what did he look after so anxiously?"

"After the devil!" he answered, fiercely; then

drawing in his head, and taking her hand, " By my soul, Clara—it is true, if ever there was truth in such a tale!—He stood by me just now, and urged me to murther thee!—What else could have put my hunting-knife into my thought?—Ay, by God, and into my very hand—at such a moment?—Yonder I could almost fancy I see him fly, the wood, and the rock, and the water, gleaming back the dark-red furnace-light, that is shed on them by his dragon wings! By my soul, I can hardly suppose it fancy!—I can hardly think but that I was under the influence of an evil spirit—under an act of fiendish possession! But gone as he is, gone let him be—and thou, too ready implement of evil, be thou gone after him!" He drew from his pocket his right hand, which had all this time held his hunting-knife, and threw the implement into the court-yard as he spoke; then, with a mournful quietness and solemnity of manner, shut the window, and led his sister by the hand to her usual seat, which her tottering steps scarce enabled her to reach. "Clara," he said, after a pause of mournful silence, " we must think what is to be done,

without passion or violence—there may be something for us in the dice yet, if we do not throw away our game. A blot is never a blot till it is hit—dishonour concealed, is not dishonour in some respects.—Dost thou attend to me, wretched girl?" he said, suddenly and sternly raising his voice.

"Yes, brother—yes indeed, brother," she hastily replied, terrified even by delay again to awaken his ferocious and ungovernable temper.

"Thus it must be, then," he said. "You must marry this Etherington—there is no help for it, Clara—You cannot complain of what your own vice and folly have rendered inevitable."

"But, brother—" said the trembling girl.

"Be silent. I know all that you would say. You love him not, you would say. I love him not, no more than you. Nay, what is more, he loves you not—if he did, I might scruple to give you to him, you being such as you have owned yourself. But you shall wed him out of hate, Clara—or for the interest of your family—or for what reason you will—But wed him you shall and must."

"Brother—dearest brother—one single word!"

"Not of refusal or expostulation—that time is gone by," said her brother. "When I believed thee what I thought thee this morning, I might advise you, but I could not compel. But, since the honour of our family has been disgraced by your means, it is but just, that, if possible, its disgrace should be hidden; and it shall,—ay, if selling you for a slave would tend to conceal it!"

"You do worse—you do worse by me! A slave in an open market may be bought by a kind master—you do not give me that chance—you wed me to one who——"

"Fear him not, nor the worst that he can do, Clara," said her brother. "I know on what terms he marries; and, being once more your brother, as your obedience in this matter will make me, he had better tear his flesh from his bones with his own teeth, than do thee any displeasure! By Heaven, I hate him so much—for he has outreached me every way—that methinks it is some consolation that he will not receive in thee the excellent creature I thought thee!—Fallen as thou art, thou art still too good for him."

Encouraged by the more gentle and almost affectionate tone in which her brother spoke, Clara could not help saying, although almost in a whisper, "I trust it will not be so—I trust he will consider his own condition, honour, and happiness, better than to share it with me."

"Let him utter such a scruple if he dares," said Mowbray—"But he dares not hesitate—he knows that the instant he recedes from addressing you, he signs his own death-warrant or mine, or perhaps that of both; and his views, too, are of a kind that will not be relinquished on a point of scrupulous delicacy merely. Therefore, Clara, nourish no such thought in your heart as that there is the least possibility of your escaping such a marriage! The match is booked—Swear you will not hesitate."

"I will not," she said, almost breathlessly, terrified lest he was about to start once more into the fit of unbridled fury which had before seized on him.

"Do not even whisper or hint an objection, but submit to your fate, for it is inevitable."

"I will—submit—" answered Clara, in the same trembling accent.

"And I," he said, "will spare you—at least at present—and it may be for ever—all inquiry into the guilt which you have confessed. Rumours there were of misconduct, which reached my ears even in England; but who could have believed them that looked on you daily, and witnessed your late course of life?—On this subject I will be at present silent—perhaps may not again touch on it—that is, if you do nothing to thwart my pleasure, or to avoid the fate which circumstances render unavoidable.—And now it is late—retire, Clara, to your bed—think on what I have said as what necessity has determined, and not my selfish pleasure."

He held out his hand, and she placed, but not without reluctant terror, her trembling palm in his. In this manner, and with a sort of mournful solemnity, as if they had been in attendance upon a funeral, he handed his sister through a gallery hung with old family pictures, at the end of which was Clara's bed-chamber. The moon, which at this moment looked out through a huge volume of mustering clouds that had long been boding storm, fell on the two last descendants of

that ancient family, as they glided hand in hand, more like the ghosts of the deceased than like living persons, through the hall and amongst the portraits of their forefathers. The same thoughts were in the breasts of both, but neither attempted to say, while they cast a flitting glance on the pallid and decayed representations, "How little did these anticipate this catastrophe of their house!" At the door of the bed-room Mowbray quitted his sister's hand, and said, "Clara, you should to-night thank God, that saved you from a great danger, and me from a deadly sin."

"I will," she answered—"I will." And, as if her terror had been anew excited by this allusion to what had passed, she bid her brother hastily good night, and was no sooner within her apartment, than he heard her turn the key in the lock, and draw two bolts besides.

"I understand you, Clara," muttered Mowbray between his teeth, as he heard one bar drawn after another. "But, if you could earth yourself under Ben Nevis, you could not escape what fate has destined for you.—Yes!" he said to himself, as he walked with slow and moody pace

through the moonlight gallery, uncertain whether to return to the parlour, or to retire to his solitary chamber, when his attention was roused by a noise in the court-yard.

The night was not indeed far advanced, but it had been so long since Shaws-Castle received a guest, that, had Mowbray not heard the rolling of wheels in the court-yard, he might have thought rather of housebreakers than of visitors. But, as the sound of a carriage and horses was distinctly heard, it instantly occurred to him, that the guest must be Lord Etherington, come, even at this late hour, to speak with him on the reports which were current to his sister's prejudice, and perhaps to declare his addresses to her were at an end. Eager to know the worst, and to bring matters to a decision, he re-entered the apartment he had just left, where the lights were still burning, and, calling loudly to Patrick, whom he heard in communing with the postilion, commanded him to shew the visitor to Miss Mowbray's parlour. It was not the light step of the young nobleman which came tramping, or rather stamping, through the long passage, and up the two or

three steps at the end of it. Neither was it Lord Etherington's graceful figure which was seen when the door opened, but the stout square substance of Mr Peregrine Touchwood.

CHAPTER X.

A RELATIVE.

Claim'd kindred there, and had his claims allow'd.
Deserted Village.

STARTING at the unexpected and undesired apparition which presented itself, in manner described at the end of the last chapter, Mowbray yet felt, at the same time, a kind of relief, that his meeting with Lord Etherington, painfully decisive as that meeting must be, was for a time suspended. So it was with a mixture of peevishness and internal satisfaction, that he demanded what had procured him the honour of a visit from Mr Touchwood at this late hour.

" Necessity, that makes the old wife trot," replied Touchwood ; " no choice of mine, I assure

you—Gad, Mr Mowbray, I would rather have crossed Saint Gothard, than run the risk I have done to-night, rumbling through your break-neck roads in that damned old wheel-barrow.—On my word, I believe I must be troublesome to your butler for a draught of something—I am as thirsty as a coal-heaver that is working by the piece. You have porter, I suppose, or good old Scotch two-penny ?"

With a secret execration on his visitor's effrontery, Mr Mowbray ordered the servant to put down wine and water, of which Touchwood mixed a goblet full, and drank it off.

" We are a small family," said his entertainer; " and I am seldom at home—still more seldom receive guests, when I chance to be here—I am sorry I have no malt liquor, if you prefer it."

" Prefer it ?" said Touchwood, compounding, however, another glass of sherry and water, and adding a large piece of sugar, to correct the hoarseness which, he observed, his night journey might bring on,—" to be sure I prefer it, and so

does everybody, excepting Frenchmen and dandies.—No offence, Mr Mowbray, but you should order a hogshead from Meux—the brown-stout, wired down for exportation to the colonies, keeps for any length of time, and in every climate—I have drank it where it must have cost a guinea a quart, if interest had been counted."

"When I *expect* the honour of a visit from you, Mr Touchwood, I will endeavour to be better provided," answered Mowbray; "at present your arrival has been without notice, and I would be glad to know if it has any particular object."

"That is what I call coming to the point," said Mr Touchwood, thrusting out his stout legs, accoutred as they were with the ancient defences, called boot-hose, so as to rest his heels upon the fender. "Upon my life, the fire turns the best flower in the garden at this season of the year—I'll take the freedom to throw on a log.—Is it not a strange thing, by the by, that one never sees a faggot in Scotland? You have much small wood, Mr Mowbray, I wonder you

do not get some fellow from the midland counties, to teach your people how to make a faggot."

"Did you come all the way to Shaws-Castle," asked Mowbray, rather testily, "to instruct me in the mystery of faggot-making?"

"Not exactly—not exactly," answered the undaunted Touchwood; "but there is a right and a wrong way in everything—a word by the way, on any useful subject, can never fall amiss. —As for my immediate and more pressing business, I can assure you, that it is of a nature sufficiently urgent, since it brings me to a house in which I am much surprised to find myself."

"The surprise is mutual, sir," said Mowbray, gravely, observing that his guest made a pause; "it is full time you should explain it."

"Well, then," replied Touchwood; "I must first ask you whether you have never heard of a certain old gentleman, called Scroggie, who took it into what he called his head, poor man, to be ashamed of the name he bore, though owned by many honest and respectable men, and chose to

join it to your surname of Mowbray, as having a more chivalrous Norman sounding, and, in a word, a gentleman-like twang with it?"

"I have heard of such a person, though only lately," said Mowbray. "Reginald Scroggie Mowbray was his name. I have reason to consider his alliance with my family as undoubted, though you seem to mention it with a sneer, sir. I believe Mr S. Mowbray regulated his family settlements very much upon the idea that his heir was to intermarry with our house."

"True, true, Mr Mowbray," answered Touchwood; "and certainly it is not your business to lay the axe to the root of the genealogical tree, that is like to bear golden apples for you.—Ha!"

"Well, well, sir—proceed—proceed," answered Mowbray.

"You may also have heard that this old gentleman had a son, who would willingly have cut up the said family-tree into faggots; who thought Scroggie sounded as well as Mowbray, and had no fancy for an imaginary gentility, which was to be attained by the change of one's natural

name, and the disowning, as it were, of one's actual relations."

"I think I have heard from Lord Etherington," answered Mowbray, "to whose communications I owe most of my knowledge about these Scroggie people, that old Mr Scroggie Mowbray was unfortunate in a son, who thwarted his father on every occasion,—would embrace no opportunity which fortunate chances held out, of raising and distinguishing the family,—had imbibed low tastes, wandering habits, and singular objects of pursuit,—on account of which his father disinherited him."

"It is very true, Mr Mowbray," proceeded Touchwood, "that this person did happen to fall under his father's displeasure, because he scorned forms and flummery,—loved better to make money as an honest merchant, than to throw it away as an idle gentleman,—never called a coach when walking on foot would serve the turn,—and liked the Royal Exchange better than St James's Park. In short, his father disinherited him, because he had the qualities for doubling the estate, rather than those for squandering it."

" All this may be very true, Mr Touchwood," replied Mowbray; " but pray, what has this Mr Scroggie, junior, to do with you or me?"

" Do with you or me!" said Touchwood, as if surprised at the question; " he has a great deal to do with me at least, since I am the very man myself."

" The devil you are!" said Mowbray, opening wide his eyes in turn; " Why, Mr A—a—your name is Touchwood—P. Touchwood—Paul, I suppose, or Peter—I read it so in the subscription book at the Well."

" Peregrine, sir, Peregrine—my mother would have me so christened, because Peregrine Pickle came out during her confinement; and my poor foolish father acquiesced, because he thought it genteel. I don't like it, and I always write P. short, and you might have remarked an S. also before the surname—I use at present P. S. Touchwood. I had an old acquaintance in the city, who loved his jest—He always called me Postscript Touchwood."

" Then, sir," said Mowbray, " if you are

really Mr Scroggie, *tout court*, I must suppose the name of Touchwood is assumed?"

"What the devil!" replied Mr P. S. Touchwood, "do you suppose there is no name in the English nation will couple up legitimately with my paternal name of Scroggie, except your own, Mr Mowbray?—I assure you I got the name of Touchwood, and a pretty spell of money along with it, from an old godfather, who admired my spirit in sticking by commerce."

"Well, sir, every one has his taste—Many would have thought it better to enjoy a hereditary estate, by keeping your father's name of Mowbray, than to have gained another by assuming a stranger's name of Touchwood."

"Who told you Mr Touchwood was a stranger to me?" said the traveller; "for aught I know, he had a better title to the duties of a son from me, than the poor old man who made such a fool of himself, by trying to turn gentleman in his old age. He was my grandfather's partner in the great firm of Touchwood, Scroggie, and Co. —Let me tell you, there is as good inheritance in house as in field—a man's partners are his fa-

thers and brothers, and a head clerk may be likened to a kind of first cousin."

"I meant no offence whatever, Mr Touchwood Scroggie."

"Scroggie Touchwood, if you please," said the senior; "the scrog branch first, for it must become rotten ere it become touchwood—ha, ha, ha!—you take me."

"A singular old fellow this," said Mowbray to himself, "and speaks in all the dignity of dollars; but I will be civil to him, till I can see what he is driving at.—You are facetious, Mr Touchwood," he proceeded aloud. "I was only going to say, that although you set no value upon your connection with my family, yet I cannot forget that such a circumstance exists; and therefore I bid you heartily welcome to Shaws-Castle."

"Thank ye, thank ye, Mr Mowbray—I knew you would see the thing right. To tell you the truth, I should not have cared much to come a-begging for your acquaintance and cousinship, and so forth; but that I thought you would be more tractable in your adversity, than was your father in his prosperity."

" Did you know my father, sir ?" said Mowbray.

" Ay, ay—I came once down here, and was introduced to him—saw your sister and you when you were children—had thoughts of making my will then, and should have clapped you both in before I set out to double Cape Horn. But, gad, I wish my poor father had seen the reception I got ! I did not let the old gentleman, Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's that was then, smoke my money-bags—that might have made him more tractable—not but that we went on indifferent well for a day or two, till I got a hint that my room was wanted, for the Duke of Devil knows what was expected, and my bed was to serve his valet-de-chambre.—' Oh, damn all gentle cousins !' said I, and off I set on the pad round the world again, and thought no more of the Mowbrays till a year or so ago."

" And, pray, what recalled us to your recollection ?"

" Why," said Touchwood, " I was settled for some time at Smyrna, (for I turn the penny go where I will—I have done a little business even

since I came here.)—But being at Smyrna, as I said, I became acquainted with Francis Tyrrel."

"The natural brother of Lord Etherington," said Mowbray.

"Ay, so called," answered Touchwood; "but by and by he is more like to prove the Earl of Etherington himself, and t'other fine fellow the bastard."

"The devil he is!—You surprise me, Mr Touchwood."

"I thought I should—I thought I should—Faith, I am sometimes surprised myself at the turn things take in this world. But the thing is not the less certain—the proofs are lying in the strong chest of our house at London, deposited there by the old Earl, who repented of his roguery to Miss Martigny long before he died, but had not courage enough to do his legitimate son justice till the sexton had housed him."

"Good Heaven, sir!" said Mowbray; "and did you know all this while, that I was about to bestow the only sister of my house upon an impostor?"

"What was my business with that, Mr Mow-

bray?" replied Touchwood; "you would have been very angry had any one suspected you of not being sharp enough to look out for yourself and your sister both. Besides, Lord Etherington, bad enough as he may be in other respects, was, till very lately, no impostor, or an innocent one, for he only occupied the situation in which his father had placed him. And, indeed, when I understood, upon coming to England, that he was gone down here, and, as I conjectured, to pay his addresses to your sister, to say truth, I did not see he could do better. Here was a poor fellow that was about to cease to be a lord and a wealthy man; was it not very reasonable that he should make the most of his dignity while he had it? and if, by marrying a pretty girl while in possession of his title, he could get possession of the good estate of Nettlewood, why, I could see nothing in it but a very pretty way of breaking his fall."

"Very pretty for him, indeed, and very convenient too," said Mowbray; "but pray, sir, what was to become of the honour of my family?"

"Why, what was the honour of your family to me?" said Touchwood; "unless it was to recommend your family to my care, that I was disinherited on account of it. And if this Etherington or Bulmer had been a good fellow, I would have seen all the Mowbrays that ever wore broad cloth at Jericho, before I interfered."

"I am really much indebted to your kindness," said Mowbray, angrily.

"More than you are aware of," answered Touchwood; "for though I thought this Bulmer, even when declared illegitimate, might be a reasonable good match for your sister, considering the estate which was to accompany the union of their hands; yet now I have discovered him to be a scoundrel—every way a scoundrel, I would not wish any decent girl to marry him, were they to get all Yorkshire, instead of Nettlewood. So I have come to put you right."

The strangeness of the news which Touchwood so bluntly communicated, made Mowbray's head turn round like that of a man who grows dizzy at finding himself on the verge of a precipice. Touchwood observed his consternation,

which he willingly construed into an acknowledgment of his own brilliant genius.

"Take a glass of wine, Mr Mowbray," he said, complacently; "take a glass of old sherry —nothing like it for clearing the ideas—and do not be afraid of me, though I come thus suddenly upon you with such surprising tidings—you will find me a plain, simple, ordinary man, that have my faults and my blunders, like other people. I acknowledge that much travel and experience have made me sometimes play the busy body, because I find I can do things better than other people, and I love to see folks stare —it's a way I have got. But, after all, I am *un bon diable*, as the Frenchman says; and here I have come four or five hundred miles to lie quiet among you all, and put all your little matters to rights, just when you think they are most desperate."

"I thank you for your good intentions," said Mowbray; "but I must needs say, that they would have been more effectual had you been less cunning in my behalf, and frankly told me what you knew of Lord Etherington; as it is,

the matter has gone fearfully far. I have promised him my sister—I have laid myself under personal obligations to him—and there are other reasons why I fear I must keep my word to this man, earl or no earl."

"What!" exclaimed Touchwood; "would you give up your sister to a worthless rascal, who is capable of robbing the post-office, and of murdering his brother, because you have lost a trifle of money to him? Are you to let him go off triumphantly, because he is a gamester as well as a cheat?—You are a pretty fellow, Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's—you are one of the happy sheep that go out for wool, and come home shorn. Egad, you think yourself a millstone, and turn out a sack of grain—You flew abroad a hawk, and have come home a pigeon—You snarled at the Philistines, and they have drawn your eye-teeth with a vengeance!"

"This is all very witty, Mr Touchwood," replied Mowbray; "but wit will not pay this man Etherington, or whatever he is, so many hundreds as I have lost to him."

"Why, then, wisdom must do what wit can-

not," said old Touchwood; "I must advance for you, that is all. Look ye, sir, I do not go afoot for nothing—if I have laboured, I have reaped—and, like the fellow in the old play, 'I have enough, and can maintain my humour'—it is not a few hundreds or thousands either can stand betwixt old P. S. Touchwood and his purpose; and my present purpose is to make you, Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's, a free man of the forest.—You still look grave on it, young man? —Why, I trust you are not such an ass as to think your dignity offended, because the plebeian Scroggie comes to the assistance of the terribly great and old house of Mowbray?"

"I am indeed not such a fool," answered Mowbray, with his eyes still bent on the ground, "to reject assistance that comes to me like a rope to a drowning man—but there is a circumstance ——" he stopped short, and drank a glass of wine—"a circumstance to which it is most painful to me to allude—but you seem my friend—and I cannot intimate to you more strongly my belief in your professions of regard than by saying, that the language held by Lady Penelope Pen-

feather on my sister's account, renders it highly proper that she were settled in life; and I cannot but fear, that the breaking off this affair with the man might be of great prejudice to her at this moment. They will have Nettlewood, and they may live separate—he has offered to make settlements to that effect, even on the very day of marriage. Her condition as a married woman will put her above scandal, and above necessity, from which I am sorry to say I cannot hope long to preserve her."

"For shame!—for shame!—for shame!" said Touchwood, accumulating his words thicker than usual on each other; "would you sell your own flesh and blood to a man like this Bulmer, whose character is now laid before you, merely because a disappointed old maid speaks scandal of her? A fine veneration you pay to the honoured name of Mowbray! If my poor, old, simple father had known what the owners of these two grand syllables could have stooped to do for merely insuring subsistence, he would thought as little of the noble Mowbrays as of the humble Scroggies. And, I dare say, the young lady is just such

another—eager to get married—no matter to whom."

"Excuse me, Mr Touchwood," answered Mowbray; "my sister entertains sentiments so very different from what you ascribe to her, that she and I parted on the most unpleasant terms, in consequence of my pressing this man's suit upon her. God knows, that I only did so, because I saw no other outlet from this most unpleasant dilemma. But, since you are willing to interfere, sir, and aid me to disentangle these complicated matters, which have, I own, been made worse by my own rashness, I am ready to throw the matter completely into your hands, just as if you were my father arisen from the dead. Nevertheless, I must needs express my surprise at the extent of your intelligence in these affairs."

"You speak very sensibly, young man," said the traveller; "and as for my intelligence, I have for some time known the finesses of this Master Bulmer as perfectly as if I had been at his elbow when he was playing all his dog's tricks with this family. You would hardly sus-

pect now," he continued, in a confidential tone, "that what you were so desirous a while ago should take place, has in some sense actually happened, and that the marriage ceremony has really passed betwixt your sister and this pretended Lord Etherington?"

"Have a care, sir!" said Mowbray, fiercely; "do not abuse my candour—this is no place, time, or subject for impertinent jesting."

"As I live by bread, I am serious," said Touchwood; "Mr Cargill performed the ceremony; and there are two living witnesses who heard them say the words, 'I, Clara, take you, Francis,' or whatever the Scottish church puts in place of that mystical formula."

"It is impossible," said Mowbray; "Cargill dared not have done such a thing—a clandestine proceeding, such as you speak of, would have cost him his living. I'll bet my soul against a horse-shoe, it is all an imposition; and you come to disturb me, sir, amid my family distress, with legends that have no more truth in them than the Alkoran."

"There are some true things in the Alkoran,

(or rather, the Koran, for the Al is merely the article prefixed,) but let that pass—I will raise your wonder higher before I am done. It is very true, that your sister was indeed joined in marriage with this same Bulmer, that calls himself by the title of Etherington; but it is just as true, that the marriage is not worth a maravedi, for she believed him at the time to be another person—to be, in a word, Francis Tyrrel, who is actually what the other pretends to be, a nobleman of fortune."

"I cannot understand one word of all this," said Mowbray. "I must to my sister instantly, and demand of her if there be any real foundation for these wonderful averments."

"Do not go," said Touchwood, detaining him, "you shall have a full explanation from me; and, to comfort you under your perplexity, I can assure you that Cargill's consent to celebrate the nuptials, was only obtained by an aspersion thrown on your sister's character, which induced him to believe, that speedy marriage would be the sole means of saving her reputation; and I am convinced in my own mind it is

only the revival of this report which has furnished the foundation of Lady Penelope's chattering."

"If I could think so"—said Mowbray, "if I could but think this is truth—and it seems to explain, in some degree, my sister's mysterious conduct—if I could but think it true, I should fall down and worship you as an angel from heaven!"

"A proper sort of angel," said Touchwood, looking modestly down on his short, sturdy supporters—"Did you ever hear of an angel in boot-hose? Or, do you suppose angels are sent to wait on broken-down horse-jockeys?"

"Call me what you will, Mr Touchwood; only, make out your story true, and my sister innocent!"

"Very well spoken, sir," answered the Senior, "very well spoken! But then I understand you are to be guided by my prudence and experience? None of your G— damme doings, sir—your duels or your drubbings. Let *me* manage the affair for you, and I will bring you through with a flowing sail."

"Sir, I must feel as a gentleman," said Mowbray.

"Feel as a fool," said Touchwood, "for that is the true case. Nothing would please this Bulmer better than to fight through his rogueries—he knows very well, that he who can slit a pistol-ball on the edge of a penknife, will always preserve some sort of reputation amidst his scoundrelism—but I shall take care to stop that hole. Sit down—be a man of sense, and listen to the whole of this strange story."

Mowbray sat down accordingly; and Touchwood, in his own way, and with many characteristic interjectional remarks, gave him an account of the early loves of Clara and Tyrrel—of the reasons which induced Bulmer at first to encourage their correspondence, in hopes that his brother would, by a clandestine marriage, altogether ruin himself with his father—of the change which took place in his views when he perceived the importance annexed by the old Earl to the union of Miss Mowbray with his apparent heir—of the desperate stratagem which he endeavoured to play off, by substituting himself in the room of his brother—and all the consequences, which it

is unnecessary to resume here, as they are detailed at length by the perpetrator himself, in his correspondence with Captain Jekyl.

When the whole communication was ended, Mowbray, almost stupified by the wonders he had heard, remained for some time in a sort of reverie, from which he only started to ask what evidence could be produced of a story so strange.

" The evidence," answered Touchwood, " of one who was a deep agent in all these matters, from first to last—as complete a rogue, I believe, as the devil himself, with this difference, that our mortal fiend does not, I believe, do evil for the sake of evil, but for the sake of the profit which attends it. How far this plea will avail him in a court of conscience, I cannot tell; but his disposition was so far akin to humanity, that I have always found my old acquaintance as ready to do good as harm, providing he had the same *agio* upon the transaction."

" On my soul," said Mowbray, " you must mean Solmes! whom I have long suspected to be a deep villain—and now he proves traitor, to

boot. How the devil could you get into his intimacy, Mr Touchwood?"

"The case was particular," said Touchwood. "Mr Solmes, too active a member of the community, to be satisfied with managing the affairs which his master entrusted to him, adventured in a little business on his own account; and thinking, I suppose, that the late Earl of Etherington had forgotten fully to acknowledge his services, as valet to his son, he supplied that defect by a small cheque on our house for L.100, in name, and bearing the apparent signature, of the deceased. This small mistake being detected at our house, Mr Solmes, *porteur* of the little billet, would have been consigned to the custody of a Bow-street officer, but that I found means to relieve him, on condition of his making known to me the points of private history which I have just been communicating to you. What I had known of Tyrrel at Smyrna, had given me much interest in him, and you may guess it was not lessened by the distresses which he had sustained through his brother's treachery. By this fellow's means, I have counterplotted all his

master's fine schemes. For example, so soon as I learned Bulmer was coming down here, I contrived to give Tyrrel an anonymous hint, well knowing he would set off like the devil to thwart him, and so I should have the whole dramatis personæ together, and play them all off against each other, after my own pleasure."

"In that case," said Mr Mowbray, "your expedient brought about the rencontre between the two brothers, when both might have fallen."

"Can't deny it—can't deny it—a mere accident—no one can guard every point.—Egad, but I had like to have been baffled again, for Bulmer sent the lad Jekyl, who is not such a black sheep neither but what there are some white hairs about him, upon a treaty with Tyrrel, that my secret agent was not admitted to. Gad, but I discovered the whole—you will scarce guess how."

"Probably not easily, indeed, sir," answered Mowbray; "for your sources of intelligence are not the most obvious, any more than your mode of acting is simple, or easily to be comprehended."

"I would not have it so," said Touchwood; "simple men perish in their simplicity—I carry my eye-teeth about me.—And for my source of information—why, I played the eaves-dropper, sir—listened—knew my landlady's cupboard with the double door—got into it as she has done many a time.—Such a fine gentleman as you would rather cut a man's throat, I suppose, than listen at a cupboard door, though the object were to prevent murder."

"I cannot say I should have thought of the expedient, certainly, sir," said Mowbray.

"I did though, and learned enough of what was going on, to give Jekyl a hint that sickened him of his commission, I believe—so the game is all in my own hands. Bulmer has no one to trust to but Solmes, and Solmes tells me all."

Here Mowbray could not suppress a movement of impatience.

"I wish to God, sir, that since you were so kind as to interest yourself in affairs so intimately concerning my family, you had been pleased to act with a little more openness towards me. Here have I been for weeks the intimate of a

damned scoundrel, whose throat I ought to have cut for his scandalous conduct to my sister. Here have I been rendering her and myself miserable, and getting myself cheated every night by a swindler, whom you, if it had been your pleasure, could have unmasked by a single word. I do all justice to your intentions, sir; but, upon my soul, I cannot help wishing you had conducted yourself with more frankness and less mystery; and I am truly afraid your love of dexterity has been too much for your ingenuity, and that you have suffered matters to run into such a skean of confusion, as you yourself will find difficulty in unravelling."

Touchwood smiled, and shook his head in all the conscious pride of superior understanding. "Young man," he said, "when you have seen a little of the world, and especially beyond the bounds of this narrow island, you will find much more art and dexterity necessary in conducting these businesses to an issue, than occurs to a blind John Bull, or a raw Scotchman. You will be then no stranger to the policy of life, which deals in mining and countermining,—now

in making feints, now in making forthright passes. I look upon you, Mr Mowbray, as a young man spoiled by staying at home, and keeping bad company; and will make it my business, if you submit yourself to my guidance, to inform your understanding, so as to retrieve your estate.—Don't—don't answer me, sir! because I know too well, by experience, how young men answer on these subjects—they are conceited, sir, as conceited as if they had been in all the four quarters of the world. I hate to be answered, sir, I hate it. And, to tell you the truth, it is because Tyrrel has a fancy of answering me, that I rather make you my confidant on this occasion, than him. I would have had him throw himself into my arms, and under my directions; but he hesitated—he hesitated, Mr Mowbray—and I despise hesitation. If he thinks he has wit enough to manage his own matters, let him try it—let him try it. Not but I will do all that I can for him, in fitting time and place; but I will let him dwell in his perplexities and uncertainties for a little while longer. And so, Mr Mowbray, you see what sort of an odd old fellow I am,

and you can satisfy me at once whether you mean to come into my measures—Only speak out at once, sir, for I abhor hesitation."

While Touchwood thus spoke, Mowbray was forming his resolution internally. He was not so inexperienced as the Senior supposed; at least, he could plainly see that he had to do with an obstinate, capricious, old man, who, with the best intentions in the world, chose to have every-thing in his own way; and, like most petty politicians, was disposed to throw intrigue and mystery over matters which had much better be prosecuted boldly and openly. But he perceived, at the same time, that Touchwood, as a sort of a relation, wealthy, childless, and disposed to become his friend, was a person to be conciliated, the rather that the traveller himself had frankly owned that it was Francis Tyrrel's want of deference towards him, which had forfeited, or at least abated, his favour. Mowbray recollected, also, that the circumstances under which he himself stood, did not permit him to trifle with returning gleams of good fortune. Subduing, therefore, the haughtiness of temper, proper

to him as an only son and heir, he answered respectfully, that, in his condition, the advice and assistance of Mr Scroggie Touchwood was too important, not to be purchased at the price of submitting his own judgment to that of an experienced and sagacious friend.

"Well said, Mr Mowbray," replied the Senior, "well said. Let me once have the management of your affairs, and we will brush them up for you without loss of time.—I must be obliged to you for a bed for the night, however—it is as dark as a wolf's-mouth; and if you will give orders to keep the poor devil of a postilion, and his horses too, why, I will be the more obliged to you."

Mowbray applied himself to the bell. Patrick answered the call, and was much surprised, when the old gentleman, taking the word out of his entertainer's mouth, desired a bed to be got ready, with a little fire in the grate; "for I take it, friend," he went on, "you have not guests here very often.—And see that my sheets be not damp, and bid the house-maid take care not to make the bed upon an exact level, but let it slope from the

pillow to the foot-posts, at a declivity of about eighteen inches.—And hark ye—get me a jug of barley-water, to place by my bed-side, with the squeeze of a lemon—or stay, you will make it as sour as Beelzebub—bring the lemon on a saucer, and I will mix it myself."

Patrick listened like one of sense forlorn, his head turning like a mandarin, alternately from the speaker to his master, as if to ask the latter whether this was all reality. The instant that Touchwood stopped, Mowbray added his fiat.

"Let everything be done to make Mr Touchwood comfortable, in the way he wishes."

"Aweel, sir," said Patrick, "I shall tell Mally, to be sure, and we maun do our best, and—but it's unco late, and——"

"And, therefore," said Touchwood, "the sooner we get to bed the better, my old friend. I, for one, must be stirring early—I have business of life and death—it concerns you too, Mr Mowbray—but no more of that till to-morrow.—And let the lad put up his horses, and get him a bed somewhere."

Patrick here thought he had gotten upon firm

ground for resistance, for which, displeased with the dictatorial manner of the stranger, he felt considerably inclined.

"Ye may catch us at that, if ye can," said Patrick; "there's nae post-cattle come into our stables—What do we ken, but that they may be glandered, as the groom says?"

"We must take the risk to-night, Patrick," said Mowbray, reluctantly enough—"unless Mr Touchwood will permit the horses to come back early next morning?"

"Not I, indeed," said Touchwood; "safe bind safe find—it may be once away and aye away, and we shall have enough to do to-morrow morning. Moreover, the poor carrion are tired, and the merciful man is merciful to his beast—and, in a word, if the horses go back to St Ronan's Well to-night, I go there for company."

It often happens, owing, I suppose, to the perversion of human nature, that subserviency in trifles is more difficult to a proud mind, than compliance in matters of more importance. Mowbray, like other young gentlemen of his class, was finically rigid in his stable discipline, and

even Lord Etherington's horses had not been admitted into that *sanctum sanctorum*, into which he now saw himself obliged to induct two wretched post-hacks. But he submitted with the best grace he could ; and Patrick, while he left their presence, with lifted up hands and eyes, to execute the orders he had received, could scarcely help thinking that the old man must be the devil in disguise, since he could thus suddenly control his fiery master, even in the points which he had hitherto seemed to consider as of most vital importance.

"The Lord in his mercy haud a grip of this puir family ! for I, that was born in it, am like to see the end of it." Thus ejaculated Patrick.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WANDERER.

'Tis a naughty night to swim in.
King Lear.

There was a wild uncertainty about Mowbray's ideas after he started from a feverish sleep on the morning succeeding this memorable interview, that his sister, whom he really loved as much as he was capable of loving anything, had dishonoured him and her name; and the horrid recollection of their last interview was the first idea which his waking imagination was thrilled with. Then came Touchwood's tale of exculpation—and he persuaded himself, or strove to do so, that Clara must have understood the charge he had brought against her as referring to her

attachment to Tyrrel, and its fatal consequences. Again, still he doubted how that could be—still feared that there must be more behind than her reluctance to confess the fraud which had been practised on her by Bulmer; and then, again, he strengthened himself in the first and more pleasing opinion, by recollecting that, averse as she was to espouse the person he proposed to her, it must have appeared to her the completion of ruin, if he, Mowbray, should obtain knowledge of the clandestine marriage.

"Yes—O yes," he said to himself, "she would think that this story would render me more eager in the rascal's interest, as the best way of hushing up such a discreditable affair—faith, and she would have judged right too; for, had he actually been Lord Etherington, I do not see what else she could have done. But, not being Lord Etherington, and an anointed scoundrel into the bargain, I will content myself with cudgelling him to death so soon as I can get out of the guardianship of this old, meddling, obstinate, self-willed busy-body.—Then, what is to

be done for Clara?—This mock marriage was a mere bubble, and both parties must draw stakes. She likes this grave Don, who proves to be the stick of the right tree, after all—so do not I, though there be something lordlike about him. I was sure a strolling painter could not have carried it off so. She may marry him, I suppose, if the law is not against it—then she has the earldom, and the Oaklands, and Nettlewood, all at once.—Gad, we should come in winners, after all—and, I dare say, this old boy Touchwood is as rich as a Jew—worth a hundred thousand at least—He is too peremptory to be cut up for sixpence under a hundred thousand.—And he talks of putting me to rights—I must not wince—must stand still to be curried a little—Only, I wish the law may permit Clara's being married to this other earl.—A woman cannot marry two brothers, that is certain;—but then, if she is not married to the one of them in good and lawful form, there can be no bar to her marrying the other, I should think—I hope the lawyers will talk no nonsense about it—I hope Clara will have no foolish

scruples.—But, by my word, the first thing I have to hope is, that the thing is true, for it comes through but a suspicious channel. I'll away to Clara instantly—get the truth out of her—and consider what is to be done."

Thus partly thought and partly spoke the young Laird of St Ronan's, hastily dressing himself, in order to inquire into the strange chaos of events which perplexed his imagination.

When he came down to the parlour where they had supped last night, and where breakfast was-prepared this morning, he sent for a girl who acted as his sister's immediate attendant, and asked, "if Miss Mowbray was yet stirring?"

The girl answered, "she had not rung her bell."

"It is past her usual hour," said Mowbray, "but she was disturbed last night. Go, Martha, tell her to get up instantly—say I have excellent good news for her—or, if her head aches, I will come and tell them to her before she rises—go like lightning."

Martha went, and returned in a minute or two. "I cannot make my mistress hear, sir, knock as

loud as I will. I wish," she added, with that love of evil presage which is common in the lower ranks, "that Miss Clara may be well, for I never knew her sleep so sound."

Mowbray jumped from the chair into which he had thrown himself, ran through the gallery, and knocked smartly at his sister's door; there was no answer. "Clara, dear Clara!—Answer me but one word—say but you are well. I frightened you last night—I had been drinking wine—I was violent—forgive me!—Come, do not be sulky—speak but a single word—say but you are well."

He made the pauses longer betwixt every branch of his address, knocked sharper and louder, listened more anxiously for an answer; at length he attempted to open the door, but found it locked, or otherwise secured. "Does Miss Mowbray always lock her door?" he asked the girl.

"Never knew her do it before, sir; she leaves it open that I may call her, and open the window-shuts."

She had too good reason for precaution last

night, thought her brother, and then remembered having heard her bar the door.

"Come, Clara," he continued, greatly agitated, "do not be silly; if you will not open the door, I must force it, that's all; for how can I tell but that you are sick, and unable to answer? —if you are only sullen, say so.—She returns no answer," he said, turning to the domestic, who was now joined by Touchwood.

Mowbray's anxiety was so great, that it prevented his taking any notice of his guest, and he proceeded to say, without regarding his presence, "What is to be done?—she may be sick—she may be asleep—she may have swooned; if I force the door, it may terrify her to death in the present weak state of her nerves.—Clara, dear Clara! do but speak a single word, and you shall remain in your own room as long as you please."

There was no answer. Miss Mowbray's maid, hitherto too much fluttered and alarmed to have much presence of mind, now recollected a back-stair which communicated with her mistress's room from the garden, and suggested she might have gone out that way.

" Gone out," said Mowbray, in great anxiety, and looking at the heavy fog, or rather small rain, which blotted the November morning,—" Gone out, and in weather like this !—But we may get into her room from the back-stair."

So saying, and leaving his guest to follow or remain as he thought proper, he flew rather than walked to the garden, and found the private door which led into it, from the bottom of the back-stair abovementioned, was wide open. Full of vague, but fearful apprehensions, he rushed up to the door of his sister's apartment, which opened from her dressing-room to the landing-place of the stair ; it was ajar, and that which communicated betwixt the bed-room and dressing-room was half open. " Clara, Clara !" exclaimed Mowbray, invoking her name rather in an agony of apprehension, than as any longer hoping for a reply. And his apprehension was but too prophetic.

Miss Mowbray was not in that apartment ; and, from the order in which it was found, it was plain she had neither undressed on the preceding night, nor occupied the bed. Mowbray struck his

forehead in an agony of remorse and fear. "I have terrified her to death," he said; "she has fled into the woods, and perished there!"

Under the influence of this apprehension, Mowbray, after another hasty glance around the apartment, as if to assure himself that Clara was not there, rushed again into the dressing-room, almost overturning the traveller, who, in civility, had not ventured to enter the inner apartment. "You are as mad as a *Hamako*,"* said the traveller; "let us consult together, and I am sure I can contrive——"

"Oh, d—n your contrivance!" said Mowbray, forgetting all proposed respect in his natural impatience, aggravated by his alarm; "if you had behaved straight forward, and like a man of common sense, this would not have happened!"

"God forgive you, young man, if your reflections are unjust," said the traveller, quitting the hold he had laid upon Mowbray's coat; "and God forgive me too, if I have done wrong while endeavouring to do for the best. But may

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* A fool is so termed in Turkey.

not Miss Mowbray have gone down to the Well? I will order my horses, and set off instantly."

"Do, do," said Mowbray, recklessly; "I thank you, I thank you;" and hastily traversing the garden, as if desirous to get rid at once of his visitor and his own thoughts, he took the shortest road to a little postern-gate, which led into the extensive copsewood, through some part of which Clara had caused a walk to be cut to a little summer-house built of rough shingles, covered with creeping shrubs.

As Mowbray hastened through the garden, he met the old man by whom it was laboured, a native of the south country, and an old dependant on the family. "Have you seen my sister?" said Mowbray, hurrying his words on each other with the eagerness of terror.

"What's your wull, St Ronan's?" answered the old man, at once dull of hearing, and slow of apprehension.

"Have you seen Miss Clara?" shouted Mowbray, and muttered an oath or two at the gardener's stupidity.

"In troth have I," replied the gardener, deliberately; "what suld ail me to see Miss Clara, St Ronan's?"

"When, and where?" eagerly demanded the querist.

"Ou, just yestreen, after tey-time—afore ye cam hame yoursell galloping sae fast," said old Joseph.

"I am as stupid as he, to put off my time in speaking to such an old cabbage-stock," said Mowbray, and hastened on to the postern-gate already mentioned, leading from the garden into what was usually called Miss Clara's walk. Two or three domestics, whispering to each other, and with countenances that shewed grief, fear, and suspicion, followed their master, desirous to be employed, yet afraid to force their services on the fiery young man.

At the little postern he found some trace of her he sought. The pass-key of Clara was left in the lock. It was then plain that she must have passed that way; but at what hour, or for what purpose, Mowbray dared not conjecture. The

path, after running a quarter of a mile or more through an open grove of oaks and sycamores, attained the verge of the large brook, and became there steep and rocky, difficult to the infirm, and alarming to the nervous; often approaching the brink of a precipitous ledge of rock, which in this place overhung the stream, in some places brawling and foaming in hasty current, and in others seeming to slumber in deep and circular eddies. The temptations which this dangerous scene must have offered an excited and desperate spirit, came on Mowbray like the blight of the Simoom, and he stood a moment to gather breath and overcome these horrible anticipations, ere he was able to proceed. His attendants felt the same apprehension. "Puir thing—puir thing!—O, God send she may not have been left to hersell! —God send she may have been upholden!" were whispered by Patrick to the maidens, and by them to each other.

At this moment the old gardener was heard behind them, shouting, "Master—St Ronan's —Master—I have fund—I have fund—"

"Have you found my sister?" exclaimed the brother, with breathless anxiety.

The old man did not answer till he came up, and then, with his usual slowness of delivery, he replied to his master's repeated inquiries, "Na, I haena fund Miss Clara, but I hae fund something ye wad be wae to lose—your braw hunting knife."

He put the implement into the hand of its owner, who, recollecting the circumstances under which he had flung it from him last night, and the now too probable consequences of that interview, bestowed on it a deep imprecation, and again hurled it from him into the brook. The domestics looked at each other, and recollecting each at the same time that the knife was a favourite tool of their master, who was rather curious in such articles, had little doubt that his mind was affected, in a temporary way at least, by his anxiety on his sister's account. He saw their confused and inquisitive looks, and assuming as much composure and presence of mind as he could command, directed Martha, and her

female companions, to return and search the walks on the other side of Shaws-Castle; and, finally, ordered Patrick back to ring the bell, "which," he said, assuming a confidence that he was far from entertaining, "might call Miss Mowbray home from some of her long walks." He farther desired his groom and horses might meet him at the Clattering Brig, so called from a noisy cascade which was formed by the brook, above which was stretched a small foot-bridge of planks. Having thus shaken off his attendants, he proceeded himself, with all the speed he was capable of exerting, to follow out the path in which he was at present engaged, which, being a favourite walk with his sister, she might perhaps have adopted from mere habit, when in a state of mind, which, he had too much reason to fear, must have put choice out of the question.

He soon reached the summer-house, which was merely a seat covered overhead and on the sides, open in front, and neatly paved with pebbles. This little bower was perched, like a hawk's nest, almost upon the edge of a projecting crag, the highest point of the line of rock

which we have noticed; and had been selected by poor Clara, on account of the prospect which it commanded down the valley. One of her gloves lay on the small rustic table in the summer-house. Mowbray caught it eagerly up. It was wet—the preceding day had been dry; so that, had she forgot it there in the morning, or in the course of the day, it could not have been in that state. She had assuredly been there during the night, when it rained heavily.

Mowbray, thus assured that Clara had been in this place, while her passions and fears were so much afloat as they must have been at her flight from her father's house, cast a hurried and terrified glance from the brow of the precipice into the deep stream that eddied below. It seemed to him that, in the sullen roar of the water, he heard the last groans of his sister—the foam-flakes caught his eye, as if they were a part of her garments. But a closer examination shewed that there was no trace of such a catastrophe. Descending the path on the other side of the bower, he observed a foot-print in a place where the clay was moist and tenacious, which, from

the small size, and the shape of the shoe, it appeared to him must be a trace of her whom he sought. He hurried forward, therefore, with as much speed, as yet permitted him to look out keenly for similar impressions, of which it seemed to him he remarked several; although less perfect than the former, being much obliterated by the quantity of rain that had since fallen,—a circumstance seeming to prove that several hours had elapsed since the person had passed.

At length, through the various turnings and windings of a long and romantic path, Mowbray found himself, without having received any satisfactory intelligence, by the side of the brook, called St Ronan's Burn, at the place where it was crossed by foot-passengers, by the Clattering Brig, and by horsemen through a ford a little lower. At this point the fugitive might have either continued her wanderings through her paternal woods, by a path, which, after winding about a mile, returned to Shaws-Castle, or she might have crossed the bridge, and entered a broken horse-way, common to the public, leading to the Aultoun of St Ronan's.

Mowbray, after a moment's consideration, concluded that the last was her most probable option. He mounted his horse, which the groom had brought down according to order, and commanding the man to return by the foot-path, which he himself could not examine, he proceeded to ride towards the ford. The brook was swollen during the night, and the groom could not forbear intimating to his master, that there was considerable danger in attempting to cross it. But Mowbray's mind and feelings were too high-strung to permit him to listen to cautious counsel. He spurred the snorting and reluctant horse into the torrent, though the water, rising high on the upper side, broke both over the pummel and the croupe of his saddle. It was by exertion of great strength and sagacity, that the good horse kept the ford-way. Had the stream forced him down among the rocks, which lie below the crossing-place, the consequences must have been fatal. Mowbray, however, reached the opposite side in safety, to the joy and admiration of the servant, who stood staring at him during the adventure. He then

rode hastily towards the Aultoun, determined, if he could not hear tidings of his sister in that village, that he would spread the alarm, and institute a general search after her, since her elopement from Shaws-Castle could, in that case, no longer be concealed. We must leave him, however, in his present state of uncertainty, in order to acquaint our readers with the reality of those evils, which his foreboding mind and disturbed conscience could only anticipate.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CATASTROPHE.

What sheeted ghost is wandering through the storm?
For never did a maid of middle-earth
Choose such a time or spot to vent her sorrows.
Old Play.

Grief, shame, confusion, and terror, had contributed to overwhelm the unfortunate Clara Mowbray, at the moment when she parted with her brother, after the stormy and dangerous interview which it was our task to record in a former chapter. For years, her life, her whole tenor of thought, had been haunted by the terrible apprehension of a discovery, and now the thing which she feared had come upon her. The extreme violence of her brother, which went so far as to menace her personal safety, had join-

ed to the previous conflict of passions, to produce a rapture of fear, which probably left her no other free agency, than that which she derived from the blind instinct which urges flight, as the readiest resource in danger.

We have no means of exactly tracing the course of this unhappy young woman. It is probable she fled from Shaws-Castle, on hearing the arrival of Mr Touchwood's carriage, which she might mistake for that of Lord Etherington; and thus, while Mowbray was looking forward to the happier prospects which the traveller's narrative seemed to open, his sister was contending with rain and darkness, amidst the difficulties and dangers of the mountain path which we have described. These were so great, that a young woman more delicately brought up, must either have lain down exhausted, or have been compelled to turn her steps back to the residence she had abandoned. But the solitary wanderings of Clara had inured her to fatigue and to night-walks; and the deeper causes of terror which urged her to flight, rendered her insensible to the perils of her way. She had

passed the bower, as was evident from her glove remaining there, and had crossed the foot-bridge; although it was almost wonderful, that, in so dark a night, she should have followed with such accuracy a track, where the missing a single turn by a cubit's length, might have precipitated her into eternity.

It is probable, that Clara's spirits and strength began in some degree to fail her, after she had proceeded a little way on the road to the Aultoun ; for she had stopped at the solitary cottage inhabited by the old female pauper, who had been for a time the hostess of the penitent and dying Hannah Irwin. Here, as the inmate of the cottage acknowledged, she had made some knocking, and she owned she had heard her moan bitterly, as she entreated for admission. The old hag was one of those whose hearts adversity turns to very stone, and obstinately kept her door shut, impelled more probably by general hatred to the human race, than by the superstitious fears which seized her ; although she perversely argued that she was startled at the supernatural melody and sweetness of tone, with

which the benighted wanderer made her supplication. She admitted, that when she heard the poor petitioner turn from the door, her heart was softened, and she did intend to open with the intention of offering her, at least, a shelter; but that before she could "hirple to the door, and get the bar taken down," the unfortunate supplicant was not to be seen; which strengthened the old woman's opinion, that the whole was a delusion of Satan.

It is conjectured, that the repulsed wanderer made no other attempt to awaken pity or obtain shelter, until she came to Mr Cargill's Manse, in the upper room of which a light was still burning, owing to a cause which requires some explanation.

The reader is aware of the reasons which induced Bulmer, or the titular Lord Etherington, to withdraw from the country the sole witness, as he conceived, who could, or at least who might choose, to bear witness to the fraud which he had practised on the unfortunate Clara Mowbray. Of three persons present at the marriage, besides the parties, the clergyman was completely decei-

ved. Solmes he conceived to be at his own exclusive devotion; and therefore, if by his means this Hannah Irwin could be removed from the scene, he argued plausibly, that all evidence to the treachery which he had practised would be effectually stifled. Hence his agent, Solmes, had received a commission, as the reader may remember, to effect her removal without loss of time, and had reported to his master that his efforts had been effectual.

But Solmes, since he had fallen under the influence of Touchwood, was constantly employed in counteracting the schemes which he seemed most active in forwarding, while the traveller enjoyed (to him an exquisite gratification) the amusement of countermining, as fast as Bulmer could mine, and had in prospect the pleasing anticipation of blowing up the pioneer with his own petard. For this purpose, so soon as Touchwood learned that his house was to be applied to for the original deeds left in charge by the deceased Earl of Etherington, he expedited a letter, directing that only the copies should be sent, and thus rendered nugatory Bulmer's des-

perate design of possessing himself of that evidence. For the same reason, when Solmes announced to him his master's anxious wish to have Hannah Irwin conveyed out of the country, he appointed him to cause the sick woman to be carefully transported to the Manse, where Mr Cargill was easily induced to give her temporary refuge.

To this good man, who might be termed an Israelite without guile, the distress of the unhappy woman would have proved a sufficient recommendation; nor was he likely to have inquired whether her malady might not be infectious, or to have made any of those other previous investigations which are sometimes clogs upon the bounty or hospitality of more prudent philanthropists. But, to interest him yet farther, Mr Touchwood informed him by letter, that the patient (not otherwise unknown to him) was possessed of certain most material information affecting a family of honour and consequence, and that he himself, with Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's in the quality of a magistrate, intended to be at the Manse that evening, to take her declaration upon this important subject. Such, indeed, was the

traveller's purpose, which might have been carried into effect but for his own self-important love of manœuvring on the one part, and the fiery impatience of Mowbray on the other, which, as the reader knows, sent the one at full gallop to Shaws-Castle, and obliged the other to follow him post haste. This necessity he intimated to the clergyman by a note, which he dispatched express as he himself was in the act of stepping into the chaise. He requested, that the most particular attention should be paid to the invalid—promised to be at the Manse with Mr Mowbray early on the morrow—and, with the lingering and inveterate self-conceit which always induced him to conduct everything with his own hand, directed his friend, Mr Cargill, not to proceed to take the sick woman's declaration or confession until he arrived, unless in case of extremity.

It had been an easy matter for Solmes to transfer the invalid from the wretched cottage to the clergyman's Manse. The first appearance of the associate of much of her guilt had indeed terrified her; but he scrupled not to assure her, that

his penitence was equal to her own, and that he was conveying her where their joint deposition would be formally received, in order that they might, so far as possible, atone for the evil of which they had been jointly guilty. He also promised her kind usage for herself, and support for her children; and she willingly accompanied him to the clergyman's residence, he himself resolving to abide in concealment the issue of the mystery, without again facing his master, whose star, as he well discerned, was about to shoot speedily from its exalted sphere.

The clergyman visited the unfortunate patient, as he had done frequently during her residence in his vicinity, and desired that she might be carefully attended. During the whole day, she seemed better; but, whether the means of supporting her exhausted frame had been too liberally administered, or whether the thoughts which gnawed her conscience had returned with double severity when she was released from the pressure of immediate want, it is certain that, about midnight, the fever began to gain ground, and the person placed in attendance on her came

to inform the clergyman, then deeply engaged with the siege of Ptolemais, that she doubted if the woman would live till morning, and that she had something lay heavy at her heart, which she wished, as the emissary expressed it, "to make a clean breast of" before she died, or lost possession of her senses.

Awakened by such a crisis, Mr Cargill at once became a man of this world, clear in his apprehension, and cool in his resolution, as he always was when the path of duty lay before him. Comprehending, from the various hints of his friend Touchwood, that the matter was of the last consequence, his own humanity, as well as inexperience, dictated his sending for skilful assistance. His man-servant was accordingly dispatched on horseback to the Well for Dr Quackleben; while, upon the suggestion of one of his maids, "that Mrs Dods was an uncommon skeely body about a sick-bed," the wench was dismissed to supplicate the assistance of the gudewife of the Cleikum, which she was not, indeed, wont to refuse whenever it could be useful. The male emissary proved, in Scottish phrase, a "cor-

bie messenger ;" for either he did not find the doctor, or he found him better engaged than to attend the sick-bed of a pauper, at a request which promised such slight remuneration as that of a parish minister. But the female ambassador was more successful; for, though she found our friend Luckie Dods preparing for bed at an hour unusually late, in consequence of some anxiety on account of Mr Touchwood's unexpected absence, the good old dame only growled a little about the minister's fancies in taking puir bodies into his own house ; and then, instantly donning cloak, hood, and pattens, marched down the gate with all the speed of the good Samaritan, one maid bearing the lantern before her, while the other remained to keep the house, and to attend to the wants of Mr Tyrrel, who engaged willingly to sit up to receive Mr Touchwood.

But, ere Dame Dods had arrived at the Manse, the patient had summoned Mr Cargill to her presence, and required him to write her confession while she had life and breath to make it.

" For I believe," she added, raising herself in the bed, and rolling her eyes wildly around,

"that, were I to confess my guilt to one of a less sacred character, the Evil Spirit, whose servant I have been, would carry away his prey, both body and soul, before they had severed from each other, however short the space that they must remain in partnership!"

Mr Cargill would have spoken some ghostly consolation, but she answered with pettish impatience, "Waste not words—waste not words!—Let me speak that which I must tell, and sign it with my hand; and do you, as the more immediate servant of God, and therefore bound to bear witness to the truth, take heed you write that which I tell you, and nothing else. I desired to have told this to St Ronan's—I have even made some progress in telling it to others—but I am glad I broke short off—for I know you, Josiah Cargill, though you have long forgotten me."

"It may be so," said Cargill. "I have indeed no recollection of you."

"You once knew Hannah Irwin, though," said the sick woman; "who was companion and relation to Miss Clara Mowbray, and who was

present with her on that sinful night, when she was wedded in the kirk of St Ronan's."

"Do you mean to say that you are that person?" said Cargill, holding the candle so as to throw some light on the face of the sick woman. "I cannot believe it."

"No?" replied the penitent; "there is indeed a difference between wickedness in the act of carrying through its successful machinations, and wickedness surrounded by all the horrors of a death-bed!"

"Do not yet despair," said Cargill. "Grace is omnipotent—to doubt this is in itself a great crime."

"Be it so!—I cannot help it—my heart is hardened, Mr Cargill; and there is something here," she pressed her bosom, "which tells me that, with prolonged life and renewed health, even my present agonies would be *forgotten*, and I should become the same I have been before. I have rejected the offer of grace, Mr Cargill, and not through ignorance, for I have sinned with my eyes open. Care not for me, then, who am a mere outcast." He again endeavoured to

interrupt her, but she continued, "Or if you really wish my welfare, let me relieve my bosom of that which presses it, and it may be that I shall then be better able to listen to you. You say you remember me not—but if I tell you how often you refused to perform in secret the office which was required of you—how much you urged that it was against your canonical rules—if I name the argument to which you yielded—and remind you of your purpose, to acknowledge your transgression to your brethren in the church courts, to plead your excuse, and submit to their censure, which you said could not be a light one—you will be then aware, that, in the voice of the miserable pauper, you hear the words of the once artful, gay, and specious Hannah Irwin."

"I allow it—I allow it!" said Mr Cargill; "I admit the tokens, and believe you to be indeed her whose name you assume."

"Then one painful step is over," said she; "for I would ere now have lightened my conscience by confession, saving for the cursed pride of spirit, which was ashamed of poverty, though

not of guilt.—Well—In these arguments, which were urged to you by a youth best known to you by the name of Francis Tyrrel, though more properly entitled to that of Leonard Bulmer, we practised on you a base and gross deception.—Did you not hear some one sigh ?—I trust there is no one in the room—I trust I shall die when my confession is signed and sealed, without my name being dragged through the public—I hope ye bring not in your menials to gaze on my abject misery—I cannot brook that."

She paused and listened; for the ear, usually deafened by pain, is sometimes, on the contrary, rendered morbidly acute. Mr Cargill assured her, there was no one present but himself. "But, O, most unhappy woman!" he said, "what does your introduction prepare me to expect?"

"Your expectation, be it ever so ominous, shall be fully satisfied.—I was the guilty confidante of the false Francis Tyrrel.—Clara loved the true one.—When the fatal ceremony passed, the bride and the clergyman were deceived alike—and I was the wretch—the fiend—who, aiding

another yet blacker, if blacker could be—mainly helped to accomplish this cureless misery!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed the clergyman, "and had you not then done enough?—Why did you expose the betrothed of one brother to become the wife of another?"

"I acted," said the sick woman, "only as Bulmer instructed me; but I had to do with a master of the game. He contrived, by his agent Solmes, to match me with a husband imposed on me by his devices as a man of fortune,—a wretch who maltreated me—plundered me—sold me.—Oh! if fiends laugh, as I have heard they can, what a jubilee of scorn will there be, when Bulmer and I enter their place of torture!—Hark!—I am sure of it—some one draws breath, as if shuddering!"

"You will distract yourself if you give way to these fancies. Be calm—speak or—but, oh! at last, and for once, speak the truth!"

"I will, for it will best gratify my hatred against him, who, having first robbed me of my virtue, made me a sport and a plunder to the basest of the species. For that I wandered here

to unmask him. I had heard he again stirred his suit to Clara, and I came here to tell young Mowbray the whole.—But do you wonder that I shrunk from doing so till this last decisive moment ?—I thought of my conduct to Clara, and how could I face her brother ?—And yet I hated her not after I learned her utter wretchedness—her deep misery, verging even upon madness—I hated her not then. I was sorry that she was not to fall to the lot of a better man than Bulmer; —and I pitied her after she was rescued by Tyrrel, and you may remember it was I who prevailed on you to conceal her marriage."

"I remember it," answered Cargill, "and that you alleged, as a reason for secrecy, danger from her family. I did conceal it, until reports that she was again to be married reached my ears."

"Well, then," said the sick woman, "Clara Mowbray ought to forgive me—since what ill I have done her was inevitable, while the good I did was voluntary.—I must see her, Mr Cargill—I must see her before I die—I shall never pray till I see her—I will never profit by word

of godliness till I see her! If I cannot obtain the pardon of a worm like myself, how can I hope for that of ——"

She started at these words with a faint scream; for slowly, and with a feeble hand, the curtains of the bed opposite to the side at which Cargill sat, were opened, and the figure of Clara Mowbray, her clothes and long hair drenched and dripping with rain, stood in the opening by the bedside. The dying woman sat upright, her eyes starting from their sockets, her lips quivering, her face pale, her emaciated hands grasping the bed-clothes, as if to support herself, and looking as much aghast as if her confession had called up an apparition of her betrayed friend.

"Hannah Irwin," said Clara, with her usual sweetness of tone, "my early friend—my unprovoked enemy!—Betake thee to Him who hath pardon for us all, and betake thee with confidence—for I pardon you as freely as if you had never wronged me—as freely as I desire my own pardon.—Farewell—Farewell!"

She retired from the room ere the clergyman could convince himself that it was more than a

phantom which he beheld. He ran down stairs—he summoned assistants, but no one would attend his call; for the deep ruckling groans of the patient satisfied every one that she was breathing her last; and Mrs Dods, with the maid-servant, ran into the bed-room, to witness the death of Hannah Irwin, which shortly after took place.

That event had scarce occurred, when the maid-servant who had been left in the inn, came down in great terror to acquaint her mistress, that a lady had entered the house like a ghost, and was dying in Mr Tyrrel's room. The truth of the story we must tell our own way.

In the irregular state of Miss Mowbray's mind, a less violent impulse than that which she had received from her brother's arbitrary violence, added to the fatigues, dangers, and terrors of her night walk, might have exhausted the powers of her body, and alienated those of her mind. We have before said, that the lights in the clergyman's house had probably attracted her attention, and in the temporary confusion of a family, never remarkable for its regularity, she easily mounted the stairs, and entered the sick

chamber undiscovered, and thus overheard Hannah Irwin's confession, a tale sufficient to have greatly aggravated her mental malady.

We have no means of knowing whether she actually sought Tyrrel, or whether it was, as in the former case, the circumstance of a light still burning where all around was dark, that attracted her; but her next apparition was close by the side of her unfortunate lover, then deeply engaged in writing, when something suddenly gleamed on a large, old-fashioned mirror, which hung on the wall opposite. He looked up, and saw the figure of Clara, holding a light (which she had taken from the passage) in her extended hand. He stood for an instant with his eyes fixed on this fearful shadow, ere he dared turn round on the substance which was thus reflected. When he did so, the fixed and pallid countenance almost impressed him with the belief that he saw a vision, and he shuddered when, stooping beside him, she took his hand. "Come away!" she said, in a hurried voice—"come away, my brother follows to kill us both. Come, Tyrrel, let us fly—we shall easily escape him.—Hannah Irwin is on before

—but, if we are overtaken, I will have no more fighting—you shall promise me that we shall not —we have had but too much of that—but you will be wise in future."

"Clara Mowbray!" exclaimed Tyrrel. "Alas! is it thus?—Stay—do not go," for she turned to make her escape—"stay—stay—sit down."

"I must go," she replied, "I must go—I am called—Hannah Irwin is gone before to tell all, and I must follow. Will you not let me go?—Nay, if you will hold me by force, I know I must sit down—but you will not be able to keep me for all that."

A convulsive fit followed, and seemed, by its violence, to explain that she was indeed bound for the last and darksome journey. The maid, who at length answered Tyrrel's earnest and repeated summons, fled terrified at the scene she witnessed, and carried to the Manse the alarm which we before mentioned.

The old landlady was compelled to exchange one scene of sorrow for another, wondering within herself what fatality could have marked this single night with so much misery. When she

arrived at home, what was her astonishment to find there the daughter of the house, which, even in their alienation, she had never ceased to love, in a state little short of distraction, and tended by Tyrrel, whose state of mind seemed scarce more composed than that of the unhappy patient. The oddities of Mrs Dods were merely the rust which had accumulated upon her character, but without impairing its native strength and energy; and her sympathies were not of a kind acute enough to disable her from thinking and acting as decisively as circumstances required.

"Mr Tyrrel," she said, "this is nae sight for men folk—ye maun rise and gang to another room."

"I will not stir from her," said Tyrrel—"I will not remove from her either now, or as long as she or I may live."

"That will be nae lang space, Master Tyrrel, if ye winna be ruled by common sense."

Tyrrel started up, as if half comprehending what she said, but remained motionless.

"Come, come," said the compassionate landlady; "do not stand looking on a sight sair

enough to break a harder heart than yours, hinny—your ain sense tells ye, ye canna stay here—Miss Clara shall be well cared for, and I'll bring word to your room-door frae half-hour to half-hour how she is."

The necessity of the case was undeniable, and Tyrrel suffered himself to be led to another apartment, leaving Miss Mowbray to the care of the hostess and her female assistants. He counted the hours in an agony, less by the watch than by the visits which Mrs Dods, faithful to her promise, made from interval to interval, to tell him that Clara was not better—that she was worse—and, at last, that she did not think that she could live over morning. It required all the deprecatory influence of the good landlady to restrain Tyrrel, who, calm and cold on common occasions, was proportionally fierce and impetuous when his passions were afloat, from bursting into the room, and ascertaining, with his own eyes, the state of the beloved patient. At length there was a long interval—an interval of hours—so long, indeed, that Tyrrel caught from it the agreeable hope that Clara slept, and that

sleep might bring refreshment both to mind and body. Mrs Dods, he concluded, was prevented from moving, for fear of disturbing her patient's slumber; and, as if actuated by the same feeling which he imputed to her, he ceased to traverse his apartment, as his agitation had hitherto dictated, and throwing himself into a chair, forbore to move even a finger, and withheld his respiration as much as possible, just as if he had been seated by the pillow of the patient. Morning was far advanced, when his landlady appeared in his room with a grave and anxious countenance.

"Mr Tyrrel," she said, "ye are a Christian man."

"Hush, hush, for Heaven's sake!" he replied; "you will disturb Miss Mowbray."

"Naething will disturb her, puir thing," answered Mrs Dods; "they have mickle to answer for that brought her to this

"They have—they have indeed," said Tyrrel, striking his forehead; "and I will see her avenged on every one of them!—Can I see her?"

"Better not—better not," said the good wo-

man ; but he burst from her, and rushed into the apartment.

"Is life gone?—Is every spark extinct?" he exclaimed eagerly to a country surgeon, a sensible man, who had been summoned from Marchthorn in the course of the night. The medical man shook his head—He rushed to the bedside, and was convinced by his own eyes that the being whose sorrows he had both caused and shared, was now insensible to all earthly calamity. He raised almost a shriek of despair, as he threw himself on the pale hand of the corpse, wet it with tears, devoured it with kisses, and played for a short time the part of a distracted person. At length, on the repeated expostulation of all present, he suffered himself to be again conducted to another apartment, the surgeon following, anxious to give such sad consolation as the case admitted of.

"As you are so deeply concerned for the untimely fate of this young lady," he said, "it may be some satisfaction to you, though a melancholy one, to know, that it has been occasioned by a pressure on the brain, probably accom-

panied by a suffusion; and I feel authorized in stating, from the symptoms, that if life had been spared, reason would, in all probability, never have returned. In such a case, sir, the most affectionate relation must own, that death, in comparison to life, is a mercy."

"Mercy?" answered Tyrrel; "but why, then, is it denied to me?—I know—I know!—My life is spared till I revenge her."

He started from his seat, and rushed eagerly down stairs. But, as he was about to rush from the door of the inn, he was stopped by Touchwood, who had just alighted from his carriage, with an air of stern anxiety imprinted on his features, very different from their usual expression. "Whither would ye? Whither would ye?" he said, laying hold of Tyrrel, and stopping him by force.

"For revenge—for revenge!" said Tyrrel; "Give way, I charge you, on your peril!"

"Vengeance belongs to God," replied the old man, "and his bolt has fallen.—This way—this way," he continued, dragging Tyrrel into the house. "Know," he said, so soon as he had led

or forced him into a chamber, " that Mowbray of St Ronan's has met Bulmer within this half hour, and has killed him on the spot."

" Killed whom?" answered the bewildered Tyrrel.

" Valentine Bulmer, the titular Earl of Etherington."

" You bring tidings of death to the house of death," answered Tyrrel; " and there is nothing in this world left that I should live for."

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

Here come we to our close—for that which follows
Is but the tale of dull, unvaried misery.
Steep crags and headlong linns may court the pencil,
Like sudden haps, dark plots, and strange adventures;
But who would paint the dull and fog-wrapt moor,
In its long track of sterile desolation?

Old Play.

When Mowbray crossed the brook, as we have already detailed, his mind was in that wayward and uncertain state, which seeks something whereon to vent the self-engendered rage with which it labours like a volcano before eruption. On a sudden, a shot or two, followed by loud voices and laughter, reminded him he had promised, at that hour, and in that sequestered place, to decide a bet respecting pistol-shooting, to which the titular Lord Etherington, Jekyl, and Captain MacTurk, to whom such a pastime

was peculiarly congenial, were parties as well as himself. The prospect this recollection afforded him, of vengeance on the man whom he regarded as the author of his sister's wrongs, was, in the present state of his mind, too tempting to be relinquished; and, setting spurs to his horse, he rushed through the copse to the little glade, where he found the other parties, who, despairing of his arrival, had already begun their amusement. A jubilee shout was set up as he approached.

"Here comes Mowbray, dripping, by Cot, like a watering-pan," said Captain MacTurk.

"I fear him not," said Etherington, (we may as well still call him so;) "he has ridden too fast to have steady nerves."

"We will soon see that, my Lord Etherington, or rather Mr Valentine Bulmer," said Mowbray, springing from his horse, and throwing the bridle over the bough of a tree.

"What does this mean, Mr Mowbray?" said Etherington, drawing himself up, while Jekyl and Captain MacTurk looked at each other in surprise.

"It means, sir, that you are a rascal and impostor," replied Mowbray, "who have assumed a name to which you have no right."

"That, Mr Mowbray, is an insult I cannot carry farther than this spot," said Etherington.

"If you had been willing to do so, you should have carried with it something still harder to be borne," answered Mowbray.

"Enough, enough, my good sir; no use in spurring a willing horse.—Jekyl, you will have the kindness to stand by me in this matter."

"Certainly, my lord," said Jekyl.

"And, as there seems to be no chance of taking up the matter amicably," said the pacific Captain MacTurk, "I will be most happy, so help me, to assist my worthy friend, Mr Mowbray of St Ronan's, with my countenance and advice.—Very goot chance that we were here with the necessary weapons, since it would have been an unpleasant thing to have such an affair long upon the stomach, any more than to settle it without witnesses."

"I would fain know first," said Jekyl, "what all this sudden heat has arisen about."

"About nothing," said Etherington, "except a mare's nest of Mr Mowbray's discovering. He always knew his sister played the madwoman, and he has now heard a report, I suppose, that she has likewise in her time played the —— fool."

"O, crimini!" cried Captain MacTurk, "my good Major, let us pe loading and measuring out—for, by my soul, if these sweetmeats be passing between them, it is only the twa ends of a handkercher that can serve the turn—Cot tamn!"

With such friendly intentions, the ground was hastily meted out. Each was well known as an excellent shot; and the Captain offered a bet to Jekyl of a mutchkin of Glenlivat, that both would fall by the first fire. The event shewed that he was nearly right; for the ball of Lord Etherington grazed Mowbray's temple, at the very second of time when Mowbray's pierced his heart. He sprung a yard from the ground, and fell down a dead man. Mowbray stood fixed, like a pillar of stone, his arm dropped to his side, his hand still clenched on the weapon of

death, reeking at the touch-hole and muzzle.—Jekyl ran to raise and support his friend, and Captain MacTurk, having adjusted his spectacles, stooped on one knee to look him in the face. "We should have had Dr Quackleben here," he said, wiping his glasses, and returning them to the shagreen case, "though it would have been only for form's sake—for he is as dead as a toor-nail, poor boy.—But come, Mowbray, my bairn," he said, taking him by the arm, "we must pe ganging our ain gait, you and me, before waur comes of it. I have a bit powney here, and you have your horse till we get to Marchthorn.—Major Jekyl, I wish you a good morning. Will you have my umbrella back to the inn, for I surmeese it is going to rain?"

Mowbray had not ridden a hundred yards with his guide and companion, when he drew his bridle, and refused to proceed a step farther, till he had learned what was become of Clara. The Captain began to find he had a very untractable pupil to manage, when, while they were arguing together, Touchwood drove past in his hack chaise. As soon as he recognized Mow-

bray, he stopped the carriage to inform him that his sister was at the Aulton, which he had learned from finding there had been a messenger sent there for medical assistance, which could not be afforded, the Esculapius of the place, Dr Quackleben, having been privately married to Mrs Blower on that morning, by Mr Chatterley, and having set out on the usual nuptial tour.

In return for this intelligence, Captain MacTurk communicated the fate of Lord Etherington. The old man earnestly pressed instant flight, for which he supplied at the same time ample means, engaging to furnish every kind of assistance and support to the unfortunate young lady; and representing to Mowbray, that if he staid in the vicinity, a prison would soon separate them. Mowbray and his companion then departed southwards upon the spur, reached London in safety, and from thence went together to the Peninsula, where the war was then at the hottest.

There remains little more to be told. Mr Touchwood is still alive, forming plans which have no object, and accumulating a fortune, for which he has apparently no heir. The old man

had endeavoured to fix this character, as well as his general patronage, upon Tyrrel, but the attempt only determined the latter to leave the country; nor has he been since heard of, although the title and estates of Etherington lie vacant for his acceptance. It is the opinion of many, that he has entered into a Moravian mission, for the use of which he had previously drawn considerable sums.

Since Tyrrel's departure, no one pretends to guess what old Touchwood will do with his money. He often talks of his disappointments, but can never be made to understand, or at least to admit, that they were in some measure precipitated by his own talent for intrigue and manœuvring. Most people think that Mowbray of St Ronan's will be at last his heir. This gentleman has of late shewn one quality which usually recommends men to the favour of rich relations, namely, a close and cautious care of what is already his own. Captain MacTurk's military ardour having revived when they came within smell of gunpowder, the old soldier contrived not only to get himself on full pay, but to induce

his companion to serve for some time as a volunteer. He afterwards obtained a commission, and nothing could be more strikingly different than was the conduct of the young Laird of St Ronan's and of Lieutenant Mowbray. The former, as we know, was gay, venturous, and prodigal; the latter lived on his pay, and even within it—denied himself comforts, and often decencies, when doing so could save a guinea; and turned pale with apprehension, if on any extraordinary occasion he ventured sixpence a corner at whist. This meanness, or closeness of disposition, prevents his holding the high character to which his bravery and attention to his regimental duties might otherwise entitle him. The same close and accurate calculation of pounds, shillings, and pence, marked his communications with his agent Micklewham, who might otherwise have had better pickings out of the estate of St Ronan's, which is now at nurse, and thriving full fast; especially since some debts, of rather an usurious character, have been paid up by Mr Touchwood, who contented himself with more moderate usage.

On the subject of this property, Mr Mowbray, generally speaking, gave such minute directions for acquiring and saving, that his old acquaintance, Mr Winterblossom, tapping his morocco snuff-box with the sly look which intimated the coming of a good thing, was wont to say, that he had reversed the usual order of transformation, and was turned into a grub after having been a butterfly. After all, this narrowness, though a more ordinary modification of the spirit of avarice, may be founded on the same desire of acquisition, which in his earlier days sent him to the gaming-table.

But there was one remarkable instance in which Mr Mowbray departed from the rules of economy, by which he was guided in all others. Having acquired, for a large sum of money, the ground which he had formerly feued out for erection of the Hotel, lodging-houses, shops, &c. at St Ronan's Well, he sent positive orders for the demolition of the whole, nor would he permit the existence of any house of entertainment on his estate, except that in the Aulton, where Mrs Dods reigns with undisputed sway, her

temper by no means improved either by time, or by the total absence of competition.

Why Mr Mowbray, with his acquired habits of frugality, thus destroyed a property which might have produced a considerable income, no one could pretend to affirm. Some said that he remembered his own early follies; and others, that he connected the buildings with the misfortunes of his sister. The vulgar reported, that Lord Etherington's ghost had been seen in the ball-room, and the learned talked of the association of ideas. But it all ended in this, that Mr Mowbray was independent enough to please himself, and that such was Mr Mowbray's pleasure.

The little watering-place has returned to its primitive obscurity; and lions and lionesses, with their several jackalls, blue surtouts, and bluer stockings, fiddlers and dancers, painters and amateurs, authors and critics, dispersed like pigeons by the demolition of a dove-cot, have sought other scenes of amusement and rehearsal, and have deserted St Ronan's Well.

THE END.

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BY

THE REV. JOSIAH CARGILL,

Minister of the Gospel at St Ronan's.

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